HE GOLDEN GATES." A POWERFUL STORY BY HEADON HILL, IN PEARSON'S WEEKLY

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 576. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 13TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

Food and Guy's Tonic.

Guy's Tonic is of the most positive value in all Stomach Disorders, bringing about a better Appetite, greater enjoyment of Food, and accomplishing the Digestion of the latter, both in the Stomach in the first instance and its re-digestion in the Tissues, where Nerve force and Vital power for the Body are created from Food.

The pain and suffering avoided by the use of Guy's Tonic is a strong incentive for you to use it. It prevents those Stomachic Ailments and errors of Digestion which cause Flatulence, Sourness, unpleasant Breath, coated Tongue, Biliousness, Sick Headache, and the like, whilst the relief it affords in Nerve attacks and Neuralgia completes the circle of good work it is in the province of Guy's Tonic to effect.

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No. 576.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending January 13th, 1900.

TRAPPED FOR THE XMAS HOLIDAYS.

Do you remember Jim Earl, of Barchester? He was a racketty chap, but when he left the old school, he was captain of the cricket eleven, and had also led their football team to victory. He made a name for himself and brought glory to his regiment on the Indian frontier, and then got cut up by the Dervishes in the Soudan. A short life, but a bright, upright one, full of incident. Indeed, he began his adventures earlier than most fellows. Of course, I don't mean scrapes and interviews with the "Head." I'll tell you what happened to him one Christmas holidays when he had only just entered his teens.

Jimmy's people had a fad for spending their time in queer, out-of-the-way holes of places. One year his Governor took it into his head to go to Sardinia and spend the winter at Cagliari. When school broke up, Jimmy

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travelled up to town with a lot of chaps, and was met at Waterloo by his elder brother Geoffrey, no end of a swell in his way, for he had left the university covered with glory and been appointed assistant private secretary to a Cabinet Minister.

He and Jimmy were to go out to their people for the Christmas holidays. And a fine time they had of it. Geoffrey was inclined to put a lot of "side" on, but his minor knew him too well to be imposed upon. Jim cheeked Geof into rational behaviour, and the two became jolly chums as of old. They had rare fun racing through France to Marseilles, where they caught a steamer which carried them over to the Italian island.

Cagliari is rather a fine old place, but horribly slow for Jim, because his brother soon got a bad attack of "swelled head." His father introduced him to the British Consul and a few local big bodies, who made no end of a fuss over a young man who was so closely in touch with one of the Queen's Secretaries of State.

Geof had no time to waste over a mere schoolboy, so Jim roamed about the quaint streets and market-places alone, and had soon rubbed up a speaking acquaintanceship with all kinds of folk. One of his friends was a funny old man who dressed in seedy black, and said he was a lawyer. He soon found out Jim's love of adventure, and told tempting tales of the wild country, the grand forest, and splendid sport.

In conversation it came out that the forests round about Cagliari were full of holly, and this set Jimmy mad to have a regular old English Christmas, and he bothered his mother and father, until Geof consented to go on a holly-hunting expedition under the guidance of the snuffy old lawyer.

"Hurry up, Geof, old man!"

Jim was wild with excitement. They had had a long tramp and had penetrated fairly into a dense forest, partly under snow, where holly bushes glowing with crimson berries abounded. They had brought a small pony with them, with the intention of bringing him back loaded with woodland spoils. Both brothers were busily hacking at the bushes, when suddenly three men, armed with guns and hunting knives, appeared from behind trees. Geof thought they were forest guards, and remonstrated, when two of them seized him, and the third laid his hand on Jim's collar.

Jim was taken by surprise, but as the men answered gruffly he caught their meaning; and, wrestling himself free, made a slash at his assailant with his small hatchet, at the same time singing out excitedly:

"Look out, Geof; brigands!"

But the men were too quick, and soon had their two English prisoners secure. The snuffy old lawyer had disappeared. With very little ceremony the three men, powerfully built, dirty-looking ruffians, hurried Geof and Jim off, dragging them through the forest to a little hut on the mountain side. Here coarse food was set before them.

"What's that they say?"

Geof Earl had a quaint theory that his University Latin would enable him to make himself understood by Sardinians, and he had found it work tolerably well with the Italian officials, no doubt because they, too, had enjoyed some kind of a classical training. But now, face to face with danger, the Cabinet Minister's important private secretary had to appeal to the small schoolboy brother, who had managed in a few days to pick up a sufficient amount of the native dialect.

"As far as I can make out," said Jim, rather relishing the turning of the tables, "that old Johnny lawyer chap has gone back to collect ransom from the Governor. Look here, Geof, keep a watch upon them, and we'll give 'em the slip."

The bandits looked at the brothers suspiciously, but as they offered no violence, Jim plucked up courage to ask them what they intended to do.

"They will keep us here till our ransom comes. I say, Geof, they want ten thousand lires. Isn't that an awful lot?"

"Four hundred pounds."

"Whew! no idea I was worth so much. But it's all your fault, Geof, for being such a big bug. But, I say, Geof"—Jim's face clouded over, and a scared look came into his eyes—"what if the Dad hasn't got the money with him?"

"Never fear, Jimmy boy, he'll soon get it," and he threw his arm round the youngster's neck. But he, too, looked anxious, though he tried to hide it.

Jim soon recovered, chatting with the bandits in broken Italian.

Jim, wrestling himself free, made a slash at his assailant with his small hatchet.

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and chaffing Geof for being such an important personage. Certainly the bandits had formed an exaggerated idea of Geoffrey Earl's position, and, apparently, their chief reason for detaining Jim was to gain a hold on the elder brother.

As night came on, it grew intensely cold. Warm blankets were handed to the prisoners, and rolled in these, with their feet to the fire, Geof and Jim huddled together on the earthen floor and tried to sleep. For a long time this was no easy matter, but Jim looked on the whole affair in the light of a lark, and, being tired out, dropped off.

It was still quite dark—the blackness before the dawn—when they were roughly awakened. Had the ransom arrived? Jim rubbed his eyes and shivered. It was cold, and no order for release had come. On the contrary, their captors for some reason were hurrying them off again. Horrible pictures came unbidden into Jim's brain, pictures conjured up by hazy recollections of every ghastly brigand and robber tale that he had ever read. As they stumbled out of doors, he clung to Geof, who, with his arm round the youngster's waist, held him up. It was a hurried march, and the brothers silently noticed with alarm as the daylight increased that they were leaving the forest and penetrating the rocky fastnesses of the barren mountains. Jim kept his ears open.

"We are pursued, Geof. I expect it'll be all right."

"Heaven help us," muttered Geof, and he drew Jim closer to him. If they really were pursued by troops then their lives were indeed in danger, for, if pressed too closely, murder might be resorted to by the bandits.

The chief bandit led the way, the two others coming behind their prisoners. It was a long flight, and apparently a perplexing one, for the bandits seemed uncertain as to their movements. Suddenly, while ascending the side of a valley, the leader halted, and made a rapid sign. Geof and Jim were made to lie down behind huge rocks on the mountain side.

Presently they heard the rolling of stones, and then heavy footsteps. Two men appeared lower down the valley coming in the same direction. They were dressed almost exactly like Guiseppe, the bandit leader, and his companions, in hairy, brown homespun, with black felt hats and heavy boots. Each man carried a double-barrelled gun in his hand, and formidable knives in their belts, while large bags hung at their backs—proofs of their illegal calling. These men, who it was now evident were the imaginary pursuers of Guiseppe and his prisoners, ran along the valley for some distance, evidently making for a pass between two crests of a mountain further up.

Quite suddenly, right in front of the banditti, three men in the blue uniforms of the *carabinieri* appeared, barring the path to the pass. The fugitives hesitated, then made a bolt up the mountain side. At the same instant four more military policemen appeared in the opposite direction, by the same way the men had appeared. All this happened within less than a quarter of a mile of the spot where the Englishmen and their captors were biding. Guiseppe made his companions

Then one of the bandits halted, turned about, lifted his gun to his shoulder, there was a puff of smoke and a reverberating report, and one of the soldiers fell back.

creep farther up the mountain side, keeping well covered behind the rocks. He spoke earnestly with his men, and Jim understood that they contemplated tying their arms and covering their heads with a cloak. But the youngster was tremendously excited by this time, and his chief desire was to see the tragedy which he felt was about to be enacted before him.

"We won't submit to be gagged or tied."

"You are at our mercy, remember," whispered Guiseppe; "and it is far wiser to lie quietly back here with this coat over your head."

"No! Leave us free, and we promise not to make a sign or raise a cry."

Guiseppe consulted his men by a glance.

"Come further up."

They put a further distance between them and the bed of the valley; and, when they settled down again, the position of the parties on the opposite side had somewhat changed. The *carabinieri* had concentrated forces, and were rapidly gaining on their quarry. The men of law and order in blue fired, but the bandits bounded up among the rocks. More shots were fired. Then one of the bandits halted, turned about, lifted his gun to his shoulder, there was a puff of smoke and a reverberating report, and one of the soldiers fell back. His comrades ran to support him, and carried him behind a rock, but soon left him. Evidently all was over.

The bandits had taken advantage of the panic to run

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higher up the opposite side of the valley and sought refuge in a small hollow, before which they built up a rampart of stones.

Soon, however, the soldiers began a heavy fire, at the same time cautiously creeping up the mountain behind the cover of the boulders. A brisk return fire was kept up, so the advance was slow, and then ceased.

For a few minutes there was a lull. New tactics were observed. Each side reserved its fire until an incautious movement exposed a cap or a sleeve, when a shot was immediately fired, and more shots aimed at the points where white puffs of smoke could be seen. This lasted for a long time. But the soldiers apparently grew tired, and once more the six remaining men opened a heavy fire and commenced a cautious creeping advance.

The bandits soon understood what was being done, and fired as rapidly as they could. There was a shout, and one soldier fell back behind a boulder. Two men, regardless of their danger, rushed to him. Behind the shelter of the rocks Jim and Geof could see the two good Samaritans busying themselves in dressing the man's wounds, and pouring something out of a black flask down his throat. They propped him up in a safe spot and left him.

There were now only five men to storm the little breastwork high up above them. They preferred to play a waiting game.

Looking down from their quarters, Geof and Jim and their captors could see the soldiers adopt all kinds of means to attract the fire of the enemy. They removed their blue caps, and, placing them on sticks, pushed them just above the rocks.

The caps were immediately pierced by a ball. Then the soldiers gave a shriek, as though one of them had been wounded. But the bandits were not to be drawn. They kept well behind their stone buttresses, and reserved their fire as much as possible. Neither party cared to risk anything.

The unsuspected onlookers, who could see most of the game, felt that if the bandits had sufficient ammunition, they had the best of the position. Night would soon approach, and then they could steal away under cover of the darkness. Meanwhile they held the position, and could easily prevent the soldiers moving. Indeed, retreat seemed almost as dangerous as advance.

Probably the attacking force understood this, and their tactics appeared to induce the besieged to exhaust their ammunition. As matters stood, there seemed to be every chance for the bandits, but the whole aspect of affairs was soon to be changed.

Three more *carabinieri* appeared over the pass. The onlookers could hear loud shouts from the besiegers, who commenced firing at the cavern. They were shouting directions, and the firing was done with the object of pointing out the spot, perhaps of drawing a return fire. The bandits, however, did not reply. Taking the whole scheme in at a glance the new-comers crept along the mountain-side with an upward slant, intending to outflank the bandits. Seeing this, the bandits kept up a slow but well-aimed fire at the advancing men, who were obliged to seek refuge behind rocks, and dash from one to another. The game was up, but it was still an intensely exciting one.

Recognising the danger that threatened them, the two bandits turned all their attention to the latest arrivals, and gradually warming to their work, forgot about the besiegers in front, and exposed themselves. The mistake was at once perceived, and five shots were fired, toppling one of the bandits over. Ringing shouts rent the air, but the second bandit still possessed a double barrelled gun, and he showed his assailants that he knew how to use it. He kept wonderfully cool, firing cautiously, in such a way as to abate the ardour of his enemies.

But though the fight was a slow one, it now could only end in one way, and so the soldiers felt it was useless to expose themselves. However, they were slowly but surely closing in. Soon the men on the upper side of the mountain would command the breastwork, and then would come the end. Having used all his ammunition, the surviving bandit seized his dead friend's gun and discharged the last shot. Folding his arms, he leant back, his right hand clutching his dagger, while he keenly watched the movements of his enemies.

Apparently the soldiers dreaded that the man was reserving his last two or four shots, and so were chary of making a united assault. But the delay told on the bandit's nerves. He gave a cry, tossed one and then the other gun amidst the rocks, and his dagger after them. This done he stood up with folded arms. He was at once covered with six carbines, while two *carabinieri* rapidly advanced towards the bandit, who held out his hands, and hanging down his head, allowed himself to be handcuffed.

The other men then came flocking round, and the watchers saw them gesticulating wildly. This soon ended. Four men were told off to carry the dead, whilst two others quickly improvised a stretcher with the guns and a great-coat and carried off their wounded comrade.

As the sad little troop disappeared over the pass Geoffrey Earl heaved a deep sigh. During the progress of the miniature battle he had been too much interested and excited to think of himself and brother; but now that all was over, that the victorious representatives of civilisation had gone, a feeling of despair came over him, and he could have dashed himself against the rocks or tried to fell one of his captors. But they, too, seemed to be greatly sobered by the tragedy they had witnessed. They talked in whispers, and showed every mark of indecision.

At one moment Jim thought that their turn for slaughter had come. Excitement had kept him up, but now he felt sick, and fell back shuddering. Geof caught him in his arms.

Guiseppe also made a hurried movement to save the youngster, but his foot slipped, his gun fell out of his hands, and went off with a loud report, which was instantly followed by a yell, and one of the bandits rolled over, accidentally shot through the chest. The third man darted forward, and let his gun fall.

Jim struggled free, seized the loaded gun, and yelled out:

"Quick, Geof, collar the other guns," and at the same time he butted Guiseppe, winding and sending him sprawling down the mountain-side, and losing his own equilibrium in the effort. But he scrambled to his feet, and, regaining the gun, hurled it with all his might at the kneeling bandit.

Geoffrey had seized the loaded gun and discharged it, but without effect.

"Let's bolt!"

Jim dashed off in the direction taken by the *carabinieri* followed by Geof and the third bandit, Guiseppe, lame and half stunned, could only join his wounded companion. The two reports had been heard by the military police, and as Geof and Jim ran panting over the rough stony ground the blue uniformed men

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appeared in the distance, running towards them, then dropping on their knees they opened fire. Horrified, Jim and Geoffrey threw up their arms and yelled. But their action must have been misunderstood, for another report followed, and Geof with a groan slipped and fell. Jim, who was some distance ahead, heard the fall, stopped and ran back.

"Go on, Jim. Go away; do as I tell you. Never mind me," cried Geoffrey.

But Jim heeded not, he was by his brother's side.

"Oh! Geof, they've killed you. Where are you hit?"

There was a red stain on the left shoulder and the arm hung helplessly at his side. Jim tried to staunch the blood with his handkerchief, oblivious of all else, when he saw Geof close his eyes and go off in a faint. Jim thought he was dead, and cried aloud:

"Geof, old chap, Geof!"

Meanwhile, the bandit, seeing the return of the *carabinieri*, gave up the chase, and hurried back to help his chief, the turn affairs had taken making it abundantly evident that all their energies must now be concentrated in an effort to save their own skins. The police, apparently realising that something unusual was happening, ceased firing and hurried up. They laid rough hands on despairing Jimmy, who was trying vainly to staunch the blood and call Geoffrey back to consciousness. Recognising that the boy and the wounded man were foreigners, two of the *carabinieri* stayed with them, whilst two others pursued the retreating bandits.

Jim thought he was dead, and cried aloud: "Geof, old chap, Geof!"

It was a long time before Jim could make himself understood, and, in fact, only became intelligible when Geof opened his eyes, after some brandy had been poured down his throat.

It was a terrible journey back, for Geof had to be supported to the high road, a distance of some miles, where they found the dead and wounded *carabinieri* and a clumsy country cart, in which they were all jolted down to Cagliari, the sufferings of his brother during the bumpy ride causing Jim the greatest distress.

Geoffrey had to keep to his bed for a week, but Jim was up and about in a day or two, fussing over his brother, and hurrying off to the Court-house to hear the news. Guiseppe was caught, and the second bandit was brought in. He died very shortly after, and Guiseppe received for his deeds a term of imprisonment which would effectually put a stop to his marauding habits for a very long time to come. The third bandit and the snuffy old lawyer were never seen again, though an hour or two after Jim and Geof had arrived Mr. Earl had received a mysterious letter demanding a ransom for his two sons. The missive came rather too late. Poor old Jimmy. He saw many another mountain battle, though never under such conditions. GEORGE C. ROTHERY.

A SAD experience is that of "Imperita," which is given in a London paper. Wanting a cook's character, she called upon the "reference." The "reference" was found in a darkened room, lying invalided upon a sofa, her eyes covered by blue spectacles. It turned out to be the cook herself, who had engaged the rooms for a week in order to be able to give herself a good character.

AN Irishman meeting a fellow-countryman inquired of him what had become of a mutual friend. "Arrah now, honey," answered the other, "Paddy was condemned to be hanged, but saved his life by dying in prison!"

"SHE told him she wouldn't marry a man who wasn't able to take her to Australia."

"Well, that's what I call a broad hint."

"HARRY, I'm afraid our baby has a contrary disposition."

"He's too young yet to have any characteristics."

"Well, he's always getting ill when we have a ticket for a theatre."

"FATHER," said the boy, with big, serious eyes, "I want to ask you something."

"What is it, my son?" asked the old gentleman, closing his book and looking wise.

"If a monkey wore shoes on his hind feet would they be mittens?"

DR. YOUNG: "My dear, your throat demands better protection from the draughts of the theatre."

Mrs Young: "Yes, darling; I ought to have a three-string pearl necklace for such occasions."

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SUCH LOVE AS THIS.

WHEN I first saw Jim Hicks slouching through the village street I was just as disagreeably impressed and just as ready to endorse the general verdict concerning him as anyone could be.

I was walking with the rector, an old friend of my father's, who had invited me to spend a portion of my summer holiday with him in order that I might quietly pursue my studies for the stiff exam in store for me. I saw this disreputable-looking fellow coming, and I was at first surprised that the rector should greet him so kindly and cheerily as we passed; and, on the other hand, I was not one whit astonished that the fellow made no reply—that was just what I should have expected.

I was about to ask my companion why he troubled to salute the man, when it occurred to me that it was part of his duty and I remained silent. It seemed as though the rector divined my thoughts, for he began to speak on that very subject.

"That young man furnishes a fairly good example of what we may call the tortuousness of human nature," said the Rev. David Lawson. "To all appearances, he is a black sheep—not a very black one, perhaps, but one that it is apparently impossible to make white. Nothing touches him; punishment and kindness are useless. Yet I feel that there is good in him, for at one time he was different."

"What caused the change?" I asked.

"Love has been the chief cause of two changes in him, John," returned my father's friend. "Love turned him from a state similar to that in which you now see him and made him a respectable member of society; and a love disappointment drove him back again. I believe I am the only one in the place who says a good word for him or to him, and it isn't only duty that impels me. I believe *she* would do the same, but he wouldn't let her speak to him now."

I was curious to know the circumstances; and thus it came about that I heard the story of Jim Hicks when that story was only partly unfolded, while the conclusion came within my own experience.

Four years previously the rector had made a determined effort to reform some of the youths of the village, who were fast becoming a danger to the little community. Jim Hicks, then about nineteen, was the worst; he was a thorough "rough" and the leader in all the mischief and law-breaking. In furtherance of his plan, Mr. Lawson enlisted the services of some young girls who taught in the Sunday-school and otherwise assisted in parish work.

Dora Forbes was one of those who entered fully into the spirit of the idea; the village had declined in respectability during the past year or two, and if it were not to go still lower, the young fellows must be taken in hand. So she took a large part in the work, and it was she who first spoke to Jim and, to the general surprise, induced him to come to a social meeting.

That was only the second social that had been held and it was a grand success; they had songs, recitations, readings and friendly chat, and they actually induced Jim to sing a refined song that he had learnt while at school.

Everybody was delighted, Jim's example was catching; the meetings were well attended, and the young fellows were occasionally present at church instead of loafing round the public house or tossing for coins in out-of-the-way corners.

But the greatest transformation of all was that wrought in the person of Jim Hicks; he was entirely changed before the winter had passed—was sober, industrious and clean in mind and body. Instead of a danger to Northing, he was regarded as one of the coming men.

Thus two years went by, and at the end of that time Hicks had saved enough to start in a small way of business as a jobbing carpenter in Northing. He had been brought up to that line, and as the village carpenter had died, there was a chance for a steady man. It was also Jim's idea to take a small farm later on and work the two businesses together, as a man in a neighbouring village was doing with much profit to himself.

In six months, Hicks, who showed considerable enterprise had acquired a good connection, and was even blossoming into a small builder; then came the chance of carrying out his plan of taking a farm, for one was to be vacant at Michaelmas and he had the first offer.

All the village was on the the tip-toe of expectation; Hicks would want a wife to help him with that farm, and there was more than one girl in Northing who would have said "Yes" with great willingness had Jim asked her to share his lot. But soon a rumour began to be spread about—a rumour that was confirmed very quickly; Hicks had asked Dora Forbes to marry him, and she had declined.

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Northing was indignant with Jim for his presumption and quite endorsed the decision of Miss Forbes. She was the only daughter of old Captain Forbes and would come into a lot of money; she was a lady, and, therefore, far above Hicks in station. However could he have supposed that she would accept? He must have been mad!

Probably he was—mad in love. Neither the good people of the village nor Dora could see the working of the man's mind. The interest which the girl had shown in him had appeared in a different light to each of them; to her it had been zeal in a good cause, but to him it had been due to a liking—to affection—for him, and during all the intermediate time he had been influenced by the idea of one day being able to ask for her hand, so that he might possess it as well as her heart.

He was conscious that there was a difference in their positions, but he did not realise the full extent of that difference; he imagined that the kind-hearted old man, as the Captain was known to be, would be satisfied with the two facts that he was getting on and that the young people loved each other. That there would be any difficulty with Dora herself never occurred to him.

When the chance came of renting the farm, he believed that the time had arrived to speak out, and he sought an opportunity of telling Dora boldly of his heart's desire and asking her to be his wife in a formal manner. His first idea was to go to the house and see her, but in the end his courage failed him and he watched her as she went for a walk and followed her.

He waited till she had reached a secluded spot and then approached and began to plead his cause. The first doubt that had ever crossed his mind arose as he saw the continually increasing look of astonishment on her face. He had expected to see quite another expression on those dearly-loved features, and a cold chill struck his heart. Could it mean that she did not love him? Had all this interest in him been a mere sham?

Dora was very gentle with him; she recognised the blunder he had committed and understood quite well the disappointment that the truth must cause him and she was sorry for him. But it was necessary to speak plainly and disabuse him.

"I am extremely sorry, Hicks," she said frankly, "but there is some terrible mistake. I have never entertained towards you any stronger feeling than that of a desire to see you a credit to yourself and to our village. What you ask is an impossibility. There are others——"

Hicks shook his head impatiently; his heart was devoted to her and there was no place in it for any one of the "others." He was turning to go when she held out her hand to him, and involuntarily he seized it and raised it to his lips.

That was the turning point in the career of Jim Hicks; from that day his habits changed and he relapsed into his former style of living. He renounced his claim to the farm, neglected his work to such an extent that he became unreliable and gradually lost his connection, and, in short, he became the loafer of two years before.

From bad he went to worse; there were rumours, as time went on, that he had been mixed up in some of the burglaries and petty thefts of which the people of Northing and the surrounding districts had had to complain, but no direct evidence could be produced against him. The rector sighed in secret every time he saw Hicks, for it really seemed that he was a hopeless case.

Dora Forbes' marriage to the son of a neighbouring squire put the finishing touch to Hicks' backsliding, although in the general opinion Hicks did not require any pushing along the down grade—he was going quite fast enough of his own accord. After a few more months, during which the conduct of Hicks appeared to be more outrageous than ever, his misdoings culminated in the commission of a crime for which he was sent to prison for six months.

The offence with which Hicks was charged was that of assaulting James Munro, the only son of the one medical man in Northing; he had attacked this young fellow while the latter was returning home late at night and had dealt him a severe blow on the back of the head, rendering him unconscious. The object of this attack was undoubtedly robbery, but the evil doer had been disturbed by the approach of a labourer who had recognised him in the moonlight and had given the information which led to Hicks' arrest.

At the assizes Hicks had pleaded "Not Guilty" in a sullen manner, but had made no further attempt at defence. When the sentence was pronounced, most people thought that he had got off lightly and predicted a great increase of crime on every circuit where that judge was sent.

He had been released only a few days when I saw him in the village street. The story, as related by my friend, impressed me in a way that I could not explain, and whenever I went out I caught myself continually awtching for the appearance of Jim Hicks. The conclusion of the story came sooner than was anticipated.

The people of Northing strongly believed that Hicks had a grudge against Dora Forbes, as they continued to call her, for having rejected him and married young Marsh. Presumably they cherished this notion because it is a common failing with human beings to wish evil to those who have not acted just as they are desired to act. but it was a noticeable fact that Hicks was often seen within easy distance of the house occupied by the Marshes, and occasionally dogged her footsteps when she came into the village street.

It was one night during the last week of my stay with the Rev. David Lawson when the final chapter was unfolded. It was rather a dark night, and my friend and I went out about nine o'clock for half an hour's stroll to refresh us before retiring for the night—a custom which the rector had followed for many years. We walked unintentionally in the direction of Mr. Marsh's residence, through some quiet lanes, and on coming within sight of it the rector casually remarked that the Marshs were either out or gone to bed, as there were no lights visible.

The house lay in a somewhat lonely position. There was nothing remarkable about it and I have often wondered why we stood looking at it; I only know that we did so stand for a couple of minutes before turning to retrace our steps to the rectory.

We had covered about half the distance, when the rector stopped and called my attention to a particular star; this led us to turn for the purpose of observing others and we noticed a red glare that made us both ejaculate "Fire!"

"Yes, there is a fire somewhere, and I believe it's at the Marshes!" cried Mr. Lawson. "We must hurry back and see what is to be done. Come along, quick!"

Sure enough Mr. Marsh's house was in flames. Some of the villagers had seen it before we had, for when we arrived we found a dozen people there and we learnt that the village engine was coming as quickly as it was possible to bring it. The house was well alight and it

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was a fortunate thing, said the villagers, that no one was at home.

Three or four of the men were making a half-hearted attempt to extinguish the flames by throwing pailfuls of water on the lower part of the building, but the devouring element had obtained such a hold on the ground floor that the chance of preventing the complete destruction of the building was very remote.

Those who were unable to assist employed their time in watching the progress of the flames and in speculating upon the probable cause of the outbreak. The general opinion was that a light had been left burning and had been overturned by the cat, and one of the two women who had arrived on the scene was bravely imparting this view to the rector when her remarks were cut short by a loud shout.

"Look, look! Hicks!" came from three persons at once.

We all looked up and there, through one of the windows of the upper floor and plainly visible in the light of the flames, we saw the figure of Jim Hicks. In the minds of those present the cause of the conflagration was made quite clear by this apparition; Hicks had entered the building for some nefarious purpose, knowing that the inmates were absent, and had in some way overturned the supposed light. That he was still in the burning building was explained by pointing out that he had not noticed what he had done and had been surprised by the flames while he was still hunting for money and valuables on the upper floor.

Both Mr. Lawson and I remembered that we had not noticed any light in the house, but it was quite possible that there had been one in the back room. However, it was useless to make conjectures as to the cause of the fire; it was our duty to do what we could in order to save a fellow creature from an awful death or from terrible injuries, even though that fellow creature was so unworthy a man as Jim Hicks.

The engine came up at a run and everyone set to work with a will. But we had scarcely made a beginning ere a frenzied cry close behind us told us that Dora Marsh had arrived and was calling loudly for her child. Then, like a flash the truth was made known to us, although none of us could ever explain exactly in what manner; the husband and wife had gone on a visit, leaving the child at home in charge of the servant, and the latter had put the child to bed and gone out. The terrified and weeping girl was now standing near us, bewailing her neglect of duty.

All this took less time to happen than it does to relate. I saw the mother make a frantic dash for the purpose of entering the burning building, and I helped Mr. Lawson to hold her back; her own death would have been almost certain had she been permitted to enter. Her husband, white as death had gone round to see if there was any chance of making a dash for the bed-room where the child had been left.

At this moment a wonderful thing happened; literally from a fiery furnace there staggered a man carrying a burden wrapped in a blanket. When he reached the open he stumbled a few paces and then fell flat on the ground, from which still perilous position he was quickly dragged by willing hands and strong arms. The man was Jim Hicks, severely burnt; the burden was Dora's child, safe and sound.

Jim was carried tenderly to the nearest house, where he was laid on a couch and everything possible done to soothe his wounds pending the arrival of the doctor, the man whose son he had been punished for attacking. Dora went with him, holding her child tightly to her breast, and her husband quickly followed. It was in the presence of Dora and her husband, the rector and myself, the medical man and the woman who occupied the house, that Jim Hicks regained consciousness and slowly, a few words at a time, told the story of the fire as he knew it—and something else.

The incidents connected with the conflagration were soon related. He was sauntering in the vicinity of the house—he had seen Mr. Lawson and me as we strolled about—when his attention was suddenly attracted by flames shooting up from the ground floor. At first, as he confessed, he had watched the flames with inward satisfaction; he knew that Dora and her husband were out and he had passed the servant in the street an hour previously, and he had pictured to himself the dismay of the Marshes at the destruction of their home. All at once, in the midst of his glee, he remembered that he had not seen the child either with the parents or with the servant; and he also remembered that the baby was usually left at home in charge of the latter and that on more than one occasion he had known her to visit her friends in the village and leave the baby in bed.

Then his old love for Dora, which had been momentarily dominated by fiendish satisfaction, came back in full force and he went into the house to save the child. Not being acquainted with the position of the rooms, he had lost valuable time in searching for it, but had at last succeeded in finding it and had brought it out safely, the brave deed having been performed at terrible cost to himself.

It was all for love of her. And he had done something else, too, for love of her; the crime for which he had been punished had not been committed by him, but he had suffered for it and had refrained from exposing the culprit in order to spare her. That culprit was her brother.

Hicks had seen Tom Forbes strike Munro and kneel down to rifle the young fellow's pocket; he had stopped Tom in his work, and Dora's brother, in his confusion and fear, had confessed that he had given Munro an I. O. U. for a sum of money lost at card-playing which it was impossible for Tom to raise, and he was endeavouring to extricate himself from his difficulty by robbing Munro of the paper. Hicks had released Tom and had returned to the unconscious man in order to render assistance when the labourer had appeared and Hicks had decamped lest he should be accused of the assault. The only thing that had prevented him from telling the truth when arrested was that he wished to spare Dora the disgrace that would fall upon her.

No doubt whatever as to the truth of this confession existed in the minds of any of us who heard it; the doctor had told us quietly that Hicks was dying, and I verily believe that Hicks himself knew it. There was sincerity in every word. And I may say at once that Tom Forbes himself subsequently admitted it.

"I did it for *you*," said Hicks feebly, his eyes fixed upon Dora with an expression of intense love such as I have never beheld before or since. "I would have done anything for you, anything! You taught me what was good, and I longed to have you for my own, to teach me always and to be with me always; and with you by my side I would have been a good man and a great man. There is nothing I wouldn't have done! And when I found I could not have you, it turned me bad. But I never left off loving you!"

He did not utter another word, but he kept his eyes, still with that expression of intense love, fixed upon the woman of his choice until they became glassy in death a few minutes later.

GEO. DAY.

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THE CRUELTY OF A KINDNESS.

JACK MELTON and Granger were always to be seen in deep conversation on the Cape liner *Scot*. Both men were of that Bohemian type that one so frequently meets with in travels, and although it required no very keen eye to pronounce them gentlemen of the first water, their hard hands and heavily lined faces spoke volumes for troubles that had been experienced. Roughing matters on the Rand, however, had certainly increased the attractiveness of the men, if at the expense of hard hands, empty stomachs, and a complete absence of anything approaching feather beds or spring mattresses and the hundred-and-one other little details which can be identified with the most humble of English homes.

From dawn to sunset, from Cape Town to Madeira, Melton and Granger kept constant company. They were called the "unnatural lovers" by some, but in truth they were the most natural of lovers in the whole world for in their rambles for fame and fortune they shared one another's joys and sorrows—in short, by their attachment they fulfilled to the letter that portion of the marriage ceremony which reads: "To have and hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish and to obey, till death do us part, according to God's holy ordinance; and there to I give thee my troth."

The *Scot* carried a full complement of passengers, and as soon as she took up the running and threw out her long stream of jet black smoke in sight of Table Bay preparations were made for drawing up a good programme of sports. Melton and Granger took an active part in the arrangements, and it was the appointment of Melton and myself as joint secretaries that brought me into rather close acquaintance with the pair. I imagine that I played gooseberry to an indecent extent, but I had my excuses—I was anxious to know their wanderings and what sort of luck the Cape had bestowed upon them.

A week or so on a floating hotel, with the constant humming of machinery, the lazy motion of the boat, in congenial and pleasant society, encourages sentiment among young bloods, and makes the old folks wish that old age had been left out of the category of human nature. The *Scot* seemed proud of her human freight and the chief engineer was growled at hourly and daily for putting in two hundred revolutions per minute. It was just the weather and under exactly the circumstances when nobody cares about record-breaking and land-sighting, when quick passages are voted obnoxious and London boards of directors as necessary evils.

We were a happy family on board, well paired on all hands, and when the word was passed that Madeira had been sighted there was much sighing, a good deal of crying and not a few promises. When a mail boat reaches port promises are as thick as the blacks emitted from the ship's funnels. But these rainbow promises are really no more than so many crumbs of comfort; still, they help to make the parting all the easier, and the formality—for such it is—is not without its happy side. The man who is wantonly profuse in his promises ought to sink his credit as much as a tradesman would by uttering a great number of promissory notes, payable at a distant date.

And the woman? Well, she really ought to be a little less ambitious as to what she will do and what she won't, for I have known cases in which such rainbow promises have misled and disheartened men whose after lives have been so much material for table talk scandal.

We disembarked several of our passengers at Madeira, and among those who took their places for a homeward voyage was a very old friend of mine who had been spending a few weeks at the Canary Isles with his beautiful daughter, a charming little woman just out of her 'teens, who had a noble face bedecked with the finest ornament woman can possess—a head of golden hair, which being parted in the middle and brought down in loose waves over the ears, was the perfecting touch to one of the most glorious pictures life was ever breathed into.

But even with sweetly pretty girls one dares to be critical at times, and if every feature and every accessory had to be analysed by the connoisseurs of physical defects, my friend's daughter would not have passed her examination unscathed because of her eyes.

Set under the most perfect of eyebrows and the most luxurious veil of eyelashes, her pale blue eyes always carried a far-away and expressionless look which, to the casual observer merely meant so much coldness of heart, to the friend, slight imperfection of sight; but to her parents and a small circle of friends spelt blindness in its most terrible form.

Only the sightless know the full measure of eternal darkness on this earth. The penalty of the affliction is in no less a degree severe upon the street beggar or the blind minstrel boy than upon those who are well-favoured in other respects; it is sometimes even more terrible but mankind is wont to be more generous with its sympathy where beauty is in distress. Afflictions are looked upon as defects. The afflicted poor may stand at our street corners and hawk their shortcomings to the charitable, but when respectability carries misfortune in its folds its owners are not so apt to air their defects. Sympathy is cheap and not an essential element, so physical defects are hidden as far as possible among the "upper ten."

Painting women in the language of the pen is not an accomplishment of mine, but it would amount to an injustice to call her, my friend's daughter, merely beautiful. To see her was to learn the passion of love.

Such was Trissy—that was her pet name—and a good deal more would be added if Melton or Granger had the penning of this account.

We were not detained long at Madeira, and when we had put to sea again and set course for Southampton I retired in search of the "lovers" to enjoy our customary lounge and smoke on the promenade deck. It was a glorious evening, a slight haze hanging over the ship like so much nuns' veiling; whilst the stars kept up a lively blinking and a full moon and a cloudless sky,

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made the electric lights which studded the ship's bulwarks look like so many farthing dips scattered about the boat.

I found Melton on the promenade deck. He was alone, a somewhat unusual occurrence, and sideling up to him I waited quite five minutes before he noticed my presence. He appeared to be wandering in dreamland, and when he turned towards me and made some passing remark about the weather I was struck with his nervous condition. His quivering lips spoke of some hidden trouble and when a man is in trouble he wants solitude, not sympathy—so unlike a woman. So I drew heavy on my Havanna cheroot, took note of Melton's sigh and said that I would drop across him later in the evening.

"I wish you would come to my cabin," said Melton, "Granger and I have had a little upset and perhaps you can adjust matters a little. When we were at Madeira an awfully pretty girl got on board—you know her, I believe."

"Is *that* the girl you mean?" I asked, as Trissy came walking in our direction. "I thought so. Let me give you an introduction. Permit me to introduce you, Trissy, to a friend of mine, Mr. Melton—Miss Allen. Will you keep Miss Allen company, Melton, whilst I get a few smokes, and have a chat with Granger? Is father quite well, Trissy?"

"Oh, yes. He's in the smoking room I believe."

"Then I will tell him where he can find his little girl," I remarked, without having the least intention of doing so; and, making my way to the lower deck found Granger in his cabin with the inevitable cigarette between his lips, a heavy frown sitting on his brow and a neatly penned letter before him.

"Granger, your lover is on the promenade deck flirting. 'Pon my soul, you two boys will be the talk of the table to-morrow evening. Granger writing neatly and Melton flirting with a girl. Really, it is shocking, old man, and if you value your reputation you will take me on the upper deck at once and insist upon my introducing you to Miss Trissy Allen, that beautiful girl I pointed out to you at Madeira. You must assert your claim to Melton and take him away."

My words did not appear to amuse or even interest Granger. I felt awkward and tried to change the subject, but my conversation was arrested by Granger who swung round in his chair towards me and remarked:

"You needn't change the subject. This attachment of Melton's interests me and you will help matters I know."

"But I was joking. Are you serious? I help! You don't mean to tell me that——"

"Precisely, my dear sir. Melton has fallen madly in love with this pretty Miss Allen. I'm going to help him win the girl; *you* won't refuse to put in a word to help matters with her father."

"But he has not seen the girl more than a few hours and has known her scarcely ten minutes."

"That's true, but, it does not take three hours or ten minutes to fall in love with a pretty face. Melton is younger than I, and a great deal more sensible to the bargain. We have knocked about in a rough sort of way, earning our living whilst fortune hunting in almost every half-civilised part of the globe. Relatives of mine died recently and left me a comfortable income. We decided to return to dear old London and live together as benedicts. So you see how the little scheme has been upset. Melton married, and I—oh! I shall jog back to the Rand among the boys. Melton can utilise my income. He's a good sort, and top hats and kid gloves are more in his line than mine."

"My dear Granger, top hats and kid gloves suit neither of you. London's too formal; take Melton to Coloradò, Klondyke, the Cape, anywhere, only don't speak of Miss Allen and him as lovers. You seem to take everything for granted, but the whole thing is monstrous, impossible, ghastly. Don't you know that the poor girl is blind?"

"Blind! Blind! Good Heavens, man, you don't mean that the girl, Trissy Allen, is really blind? Why, her eyes—her blue eyes, man, they're not blind?"

"Sightless, my dear Granger, sightless."

"Poor old Melton," said Granger, and burying his head in his hands he remained silent for ten minutes or more. The great beads of sorrow which trickled down his hard set face moistened my eyes, and in that little cabin were the two heaviest hearts in the whole world. Men ought not to cry, but the honest tears of a strong man are worth their weight in gold.

"You have made a mistake," said Granger, crushing back a tear, "Miss Allen that was is Mrs. So-and-So now, married since you last met. Melton must never know that she is blind—you understand. Let us get him away from her at once. You must lie to him, I can't."

So said Granger, and hooking arms we betook ourselves to the promenade deck.

Poor old Melton was looking very happy and it was evident that our intrusion annoyed him. His subtle hints were lost, however, and when I suggested escorting Miss Allen to her father his looks towards me were not kindly disposed. He whispered "cad" in my ear, and I passed him my cigar case to soothe his feelings.

"I hope my friend has not bored you," I remarked to Trissy.

"That's not charitable. He's a charming fellow, so considerate and entertaining. Tell me, does he know about my eyes?"

"Yes, I think. Your father was telling his wife at dinner."

"His wife! You said wife, didn't you?"

"Yes. Would you like to know her?"

"Oh! no, thanks!"

* * * * *

I rejoined Melton and Granger in their cabin. When Melton had finished abusing me for interfering with his *tête-à-tête* in such an indecent manner, I broke the "news" as gently as I could. I talked about the pity of young and pretty girls being swallowed up by rich old men and remarked upon how surprised I was to hear that Trissy was married up to some old buffer.

Melton looked at me very hard and said: "I thought you introduced her to me as Miss Allen."

"I owe you an apology, Melton. Her father has just told me that she is a Mrs. Somebody or other—an old man's darling."

Melton's whole frame quailed. He chewed the butt end of his cigar, and I never felt such a cad in all my life. He looked towards Granger as if in search of the truth. Granger was stretched out on his bunk, eyes closed and tears trickling down his ashy cheek.

"What are you crying for?" said Melton.

"It's the smoke of one of your bad cigars that's got in my eyes," replied Granger, flicking the ash off his dead cheroot.

But, Granger was crying, whilst Melton's heart bled. And that's the truth.

GEORGE MARTIN.

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The Three Inseparables.

A BOARDING SCHOOL STORY.

THE three "Inseparables" were sitting in the big bay window of Dorothy Rivers' room at the Misses Primrose's Seminary for Young Ladies at Brighton, and they were looking as glum as could be. And this will seem strange when I tell you that the Christmas holidays were only ten days off, and their young heads should have been full of such joyous things as visions of home comings, pantomimes and plum puddings.

The trouble was this: Both Dorothy and Edith Howard had received a note saying that their mid-year examinations in English history and geography had been so poor that unless they were prepared to take another examination in each study before they went home for Christmas the Misses Primrose would be obliged to give them holiday work to do.

Now, to have to study during the holidays was too horrible to contemplate. It would spoil half their fun, and, moreover, it was a sort of disgrace which both girls would have felt keenly.

It was rather strange that both of them should have been found deficient in the same studies, and also strange that Ada Ward, the third of the "Inseparables," should have passed everything. It was nothing but pure luck, as she was decidedly the poorest scholar of the three.

Ada had invited both Edith and Dorothy home with her for the holidays, as Edith's home was in Scotland, and Dorothy's sole relative—her father—was still abroad.

"Isn't it too dreadful for anything!" exclaimed Dorothy, with tears in her eyes, as she gazed blankly at the note.

"I see nothing for us to do but to burn the midnight oil between now and breaking-up time," said Edith despondently.

"What! Study your eyes red and worry yourselves half to death just to please our dear teachers?" demanded Ada. "Why, I won't hear of it. So just put that idea out of your head at once."

Ada was a healthy, robust girl of fifteen, and, being older than her two friends, she had assumed a sort of guardianship over them which they did not dispute.

"All right, Ada," said Dorothy meekly. "I am not over anxious to work myself ill, but what do you propose to do?"

"Let me have till to-morrow morning to think out a plan, and I'll promise you to find a way out of your trouble."

The two worried ones had unbounded confidence in Ada's ability to get them out of any scrape, and now, with sighs of relief, they dismissed the matter from their minds and, going out in the school playgrounds, they had a merry romp till it was time to dress for dinner.

The next morning at breakfast a letter was handed to Ada. She opened it, frowned, and bit her lip. "So provoking!" she murmured.

"I trust there is nothing wrong at home, Miss Ada!" said Miss Tabitha Primrose, looking over her spectacles at her pupil.

"Why, my cousin Alice, who lives at Hove, wants me to spend a couple of days with her. She is not well and her husband is away on business. She says the carriage will be here for me in an hour or so," replied Ada, and she handed the missive across the table to Miss Tabitha.

"I am very sorry to have you miss any recitations at this time," said Miss Primrose. "But, under the circumstances, of course, fall in with your cousin's wishes."

"Thank you, Miss Primrose. I am quite sure Alice really needs me or she would not have sent this note," replied Ada, and hurrying through the meal, she excused herself, and went to her room to get ready for her departure. Here Edith and Dorothy found her ten minutes later.

"You're a nice one!" cried Dorothy, breathlessly, "running off in this fashion, when you promised to get us out of our scrape."

Ada burst out laughing.

"My dear girls," she began, "this visit of mine is simply part of my little scheme to help you out of your scrape."

Two long drawn eloquent "Ohs!" came from the other two.

Ada went to her little desk and picked up some slips of paper.

"Here, girls," she said, "take these papers. They contain a list of questions in English history and geography. Learn the answers perfectly. It won't take you long. Now, my dears," she went on, "don't be surprised at what may happen during the next two or three days. All I ask of you is to learn the answers to these questions, and give them when they are asked of you. And now, good-bye for a little while."

"But Ada!" cried Edith, "please tell us more. What does it all mean?"

"The less you know—now—the less danger there is of my little plan going amiss," retorted Ada, and not another word could her two friends draw out of her.

That night at dinner Miss Tabitha made the following announcement to the school:

"I have just received a letter from Miss Mary Evans, who is, so she informs me, a teacher in a large school for girls in the north of England. She says that she has heard of our excellent method of instruction and she is going to take the liberty—as she expresses it—of calling here to-morrow. She says she would like to spend a few hours attending our various classes with the idea of studying our methods.

"I need not tell you," Miss Tabitha added, "that I shall be most pleased to entertain Miss Evans, who, I am sure, must be an extremely nice person, judging

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from her letter. Of course, I trust all you young ladies will make it your special duty to be well prepared for to-morrow's recitations, as I shall naturally feel a pride in your making a good impression before a strange teacher."

Dorothy looked at Edith and Edith looked at Dorothy. Then they grew red in the face. Presently they both stole from the table and went straight for Dorothy's room.

"What can it mean?" burst out Dorothy. "You don't think that—that——"

"Oh, no! It's just a coincidence; that's all," replied Edith. "All the same, we had better study the questions Ada told us to, and to-night."

And they did, working till long past their usual bedtime. Miss Tabitha, seeing a chink of light under Dorothy's door, walked in.

"Under ordinary circumstances I should not approve of such late hours," she announced to the two girls, "but owing to the fact that you are both deficient and that we are expecting a visiting teacher I regard this studiousness as most commendable." And so saying she bestowed a faint smile on Edith and Dorothy and left them.

Miss Evans did not come the next day, much to the disappointment of the school, which had carefully prepared itself in its studies. The second day, however the lady arrived shortly after morning prayers. The maid came in and told Miss Tabitha, whereupon that excellent lady hurried down from the rostrum and went to greet her distinguished visitor.

She was gone about three minutes, when she returned, ushering in a lady of medium height, in a sober gown, and whose eyes were rather weak evidently, as she wore blue goggles. Her hair was neatly plastered down and parted in the middle in the old-fashioned way, and a very plain bonnet adorned her head. Altogether she was an intensely respectable lady, of apparently middle age. She had a wonderfully clear, ruddy skin for her years, and not a wrinkle was to be seen.

Miss Tabitha introduced her to her sister, and then Miss Primrose came forward to the edge of the rostrum, and said in impressive tones:

"Young ladies, I have the great pleasure and honour to introduce to you my esteemed fellow teacher, Miss Mary Evans, of York." A loud clapping of hands greeted Miss Evans as she stepped forward, with a smile.

"Girls," said the visitor, "it is a great pleasure to be standing here addressing you to-day." How great a pleasure it was none of her hearers knew then or ever did know except Dorothy and Edith. "I have heard a great deal about you and this excellent establishment." Here the speaker turned and smiled graciously at the two principals, who bobbed their heads and fairly beamed with gratified pride. "And I hope to-day to learn with my own ears that the good reports of your high standard of studiousness have not been exaggerated."

At that a perfect buzz went round the room, and each girl wondered with a good deal of trepidation if she would be the one to be called upon.

"I should inform you," Miss Evans went on, "that English history and geography are the branches which I am most interested in," which was perfectly true at that particular time, "and I trust the Misses Primrose will permit me to put a few questions to you at random."

Here Miss Evans turned to the two sisters. Immediately Miss Tabitha jumped up and got a couple of books, which she placed in Miss Evans's hand.

"You will find to-day's lesson marked in each book," said Miss Tabitha.

"Oh! Thank you," said Miss Evans. "But with your permission I should prefer to ask the girls some questions of the work they have gone over instead of to-day's lesson. It is so much better as a test of what they know."

There was a doleful silence at that, and the Misses Primrose looked glumly at one another, for none knew better than they how quickly their pupils forgot, and Miss Tabitha was afraid the result would not be flattering to her pride. She could not very well refuse Miss Evans's request, however, and so, rather ungraciously, she gave her consent to her scholars being examined on their past work.

Miss Evans asked a couple of questions, one of which was answered correctly, but the second floored two or three. Then Miss Evans looked at Dorothy.

"Can you give me the answer?" she asked.

Of course Dorothy could, for it was one of the questions which Ada had told them to study. Miss Tabitha beamed upon Dorothy. It was a very searching question, and she had not expected such cleverness from her. Miss Evans went on picking out difficult questions in both history and geography, and somehow it was Dorothy or Edith who answered most of them.

At length Miss Evans said she must take her departure, at which the Misses Primrose expressed their great regret. They went with her to the door to see her off, and on the way Miss Evans inquired very particularly about those two girls who were so quick with the correct answers.

"Dorothy Rivers and Edith Howard are the young ladies to whom you refer," replied Miss Primrose.

"My dear Miss Primrose," cried Miss Evans impressively, "I must congratulate you on having two such clever, intelligent girls. Quite out of the ordinary, my dear madam, quite out of the ordinary. Now, good-bye, and let me thank you for the kindness which you have shown in giving me this opportunity to study your very excellent system which has such splendid results. I have enjoyed myself immensely. In fact, I don't know when I have enjoyed myself more!"

And then Miss Evans left with considerable haste. If the Misses Primrose could have seen her after she turned the corner they would have been astonished. For the stately Miss Evans was leaning up against a fence in a fit of hysterics. When she had recovered sufficiently to proceed she picked up her skirts and ran—yes, actually ran! till finally she came to a waiting carriage. She climbed in and fell into the arms of a bright, cheery looking little woman who was evidently expecting her.

"Well," said this person. "Did it work all right?"

"Oh, Alice dear!" cried Miss Evans. "Not a soul suspected. It worked like a charm!"

And then Ada, for of course it was she, went into another spasm of laughter. It was fully half an hour before her young married cousin who had helped her to carry out her daring trick could get six words from her as to how the thing went off.

The Misses Primrose were so delighted with the credit which Dorothy and Edith had brought upon the school by reason of their excellent conduct before Miss Evans, that they excused the girls from taking the extra examination.

Needless to say, both Dorothy and Edith learnt the truth about Miss Evans. But to this day the story has gone no farther.

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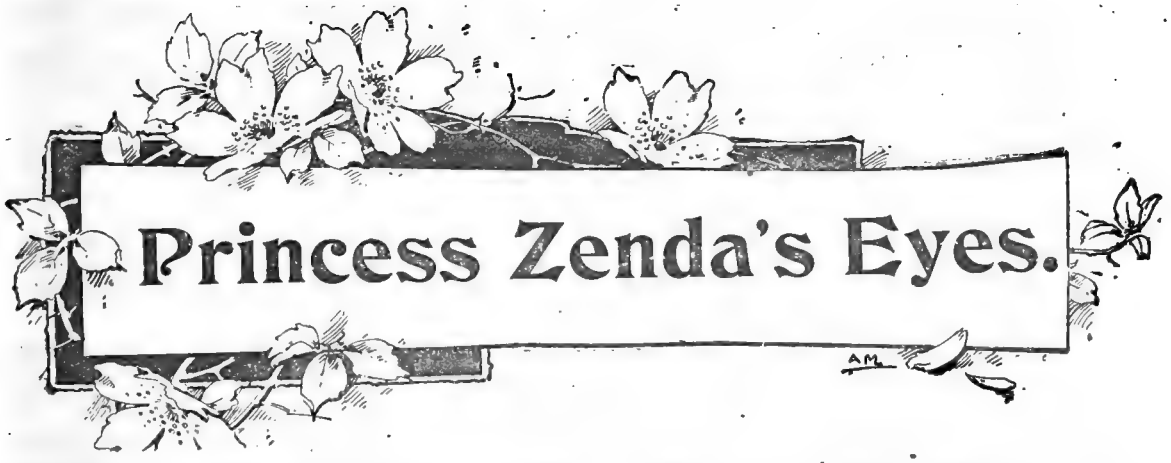

Princess Zenda's Eyes.

"Don't look at me like that, Zenda," a soft, sweet voice cried. "You give me the horrors! I can't tell you how I dislike it."

The speaker was Norah FitzGerald, an Irish child of twelve, whose auburn hair, blue eyes and fair round face were in curious contrast to the lovely oval face framed in soft waves of dusky hair of the little Roman Princess Zenda, her large dreamy brown eyes fringed with dark lashes which cast a shadow on the curve of a cheek rich as a pomegranate in its colouring.

"If her life's summer fulfils the promise of her life's spring, she will be the most beautiful woman in Rome," had been said of her by an old connoisseur in feminine charms, a friend of Prince di Lonza, Zenda's father.

"Look at you! Like what?" Zenda asked in a wondering voice. "You are the third person to-day who has said to me: 'Do not look at me like that!' First it was Lucia, the woman who brings the milk. She called out when she saw me, 'Don't look at me like that, Principessa!' and straightway dropped her big earthenware jar full of milk, which broke into a thousand pieces. She went away crying to get some more, grumbling the while that it was all my fault!

"Then a while after I saw Beppo, the gardener, who was going along, laden with flowers and fruit. He stopped short and cried out in just the same way, then limped off, declaring that he had sprained his ankle, and that it was all my fault!

"I ask of you now, Norah, how could either mishap be my fault? They were both accidents such as might happen to anybody. And as to my eyes, again I say, why am I not to look? And look like what? Are my eyes different from other people's eyes? *Dio mio!* Then in what way? Mine are brown and yours are blue, but with our eyes we both see the same things, don't we? Look, there in that chair is the Padre Bruno, our chaplain. Good, I see a white-haired old priest with the face of a saint; what do you see?"

"I see the same," said Norah, "but it's no good talking, Zenda, I don't mean seeing, I mean looking, and if that's an Irishism, I can't help it, for you have an uncanny expression in your eyes sometimes, which makes me wish to run away."

Upon which Zenda abruptly turned her back upon her; her big brown eyes—eyes which everybody seemed to object to—full of tears; then she crossed the balcony impulsively to where the old priest sat conning his breviary, oblivious to everything outside its covers, and knelt down beside him.

"*Padre mio!*" she said beseechingly.

The Padre laid down his book and looked at the lovely pleading face from over the top of his spectacles.

"Well, my child?" he said, and paused.

"Can you see anything the matter with my eyes?" she asked.

"The matter with your eyes?" he repeated. "Why, are they paining you?"

"No, no!" poor Zenda cried, and then told him the little story of her woes as she had told it to Norah.

The old priest waited patiently until she had finished; then he shook his head.

"The Devil's antics are strange sometimes," he said, "but your eyes——"

He looked at her again, and Zenda, all her soul in her face returned his gaze with frank simplicity.

"Child! Don't look at me like that!" he cried sharply. "It is as though the Devil himself had got inside you and looked forth from your eyes—the windows of your soul!"

Zenda clasped her hands on her knees.

"Not you too, *padre mio!*" she said despairingly. "What have I done to be the fit abode of evil?"

"My child," the Padre answered gravely, "it is God's most beautiful temples which Satan would fain enter and desecrate. See here—I will bless you—then go. I must finish my prayers, for presently I have to go and confess the nuns in the Convent of Santa Maria yonder."

He raised his hand and blessed her with a sweet solemnity, and Zenda rose from her knees feeling in a measure comforted, and afterwards, for many a long day she was not met with the strange entreaty:

"Princess! Do not look at me like that!"

* * * * *

The years sped by all too swiftly. Norah FitzGerald, from a little Irish girl, became a piquant beauty of eighteen, made her *début* in London, and in her first season, married a man who was considered the great *parti* of that year.

And so, she passed through the portals which lead to wifehood, motherhood, and passes also from this story, her wreath of orange blossoms still resting sweet and fresh upon her pretty Irish head.

And Zenda?

Zenda had lost her mother when she was just thirteen, and for months after that her life would have been a blank, but that at first it was full of Requiems.

By-and-bye, when the first keenness of her sorrow had

worn off, she dreamt away the hours in her father's stately palace amongst her flowers and birds, except the time she spent in study with the white-haired priest, their chaplain. He was the one friend to whom she seemed to cling.

Her father, busy with many things because of the official position he held at the Vatican had little time to give his child. He hardly noticed her, until one day, her existence was very practically brought before him by Donna Lesbia.

Donna Lesbia was an old relation who lived with the Di Longas, to do the house-keeping and to keep an eye on Zenda, the motherless young girl.

She sent one day a formal message to the Prince—she wished, she said to see him immediately on business.

The Prince happened to have a spare half hour, and was in an unusually good temper owing to the success of one of his speculations.

"Tell Donna Lesbia that I shall be with her on the instant," he told the servant, and throwing away his half-smoked cigarette, he went along the passage leading to the wing occupied by Donna Lesbia and the Princess Zenda. It faced the oratory and the Padre's room and study.

Donna Lesbia was sitting near the window in a great elbow-chair of carved wood, high-backed and cushioned with green and gold brocade.

Her dignified mien and austere face frightened Zenda rather, and she ran away from her whenever she could to take refuge with Padre Bruno.

But the Donna Lesbia had a kind heart under the snow-white kerchief she wore so primly crossed over her bosom; and she also possessed a large share of common sense and a seasoning of worldly wisdom hardly guessed at by those who saw her wrapped up in her devotions, engaged in work amongst the poor, or stitching for hours exquisite things on satin with lavish use of golden thread, chiefly vestments destined for some poor parish church.

"*Buono giorno*, my aunt, *come sta?*" was her kinsman's greeting.

"I am well, thank you—and you?"

"Better than I have ever felt in my life," he told her. "And now what may the business be, my dear lady? I am ready to give you my best attention."

"That is well," said Donna Lesbia quietly, "for it is no less a matter than the marriage of your daughter."

"The marriage of my daughter! But—*donna mia!* You are surely joking? Zenda's marriage—that child? What nonsense!"

"She is not a child," said Donna Lesbia firmly. "You forget how time passes, Francesco; Zenda is already eighteen.

"Every morning at eight o'clock, Zenda goes to hear a mass at the church of Santa Maria there, opposite our gates, attended by her old nurse Anunziata; and every morning—so I am told by the faithful servant—the young Duke of Spolento attends the same mass.

"I should have thought that this was a mere coincidence but yesterday I received a visit of ceremony from his mother, the Duchess, who asked for your daughter's hand in the name of her son."

"The Duke of Spolento," repeated the Prince. "Good—if the child must marry, I could not wish for a better alliance. He is young, rich, handsome, distinguished—but Zenda asked already in marriage! I can't grasp the idea at all. But then, I have not seen the child for ages; send for her quickly, I want to look at her."

Donna Lesbia took up an antique silver bell which stood on a table near her and rang it. An old servant with a face like a wrinkled apple appeared.

"Anunziata, ask the Princess Zenda to be so good as to come to me here."

The old woman courtesied and withdrew, after giving a sharp glance out of her shrewd black eyes, first at her mistress then at the Prince.

"There is something in the wind," she muttered as she hobbled away to fetch Zenda, who, all unsuspecting, ran lightly along the corridor to her aunt's room still holding in her hands her favourite pet, a snow-white dove.

She paused on the threshold, holding back the heavy crimson curtain with one hand, when she saw that Donna Lesbia was not alone; then she came forward and kissed her father's hand with a cold dutifulness which vexed him.

"But I am a stranger to her," he thought. "How could it be otherwise? Goodness! How the child has grown, and what a beauty! She looks like a Madonna, too, in that plain white woollen dress with its long straight folds and jewelled girdle! Why, Aunt Lesbia," he said aloud, "she will turn half the heads in Rome—we won't speak about the hearts."

"Hush!" said Donna Lesbia softly, "the child is as simple about her beauty as is that dove she carries. Don't spoil her, I beseech you!"

"Well, well, as you will. Are you going to leave all the pretty things to be said by the husband-elect—eh?"

Donna Lesbia smiled a little and shook her head.

"What do you think of getting married, child?" the Prince asked Zenda.

"Married!—I?" said Zenda wonderingly.

"Yes, you, Zenda, my little daughter—but no, you are tall, though so slender—and—what an air! Child—how like you are to your mother!"

The Prince paused and turned aside.

If his mind was shallow in parts, it held one sacred depth—his love for his dead wife, and Zenda noticed and marvelled to see that there were tears in his eyes.

"Your hand has been asked in marriage by the young Duke of Spolento," the Prince continued. "I understand that he attends the same mass as you, my daughter—a strange coincidence truly; I am glad to hear that he is so devout!"

Zenda's lovely face flushed until the crimson wave had reached her soft dark hair.

"The Duke of Spolento!" she repeated.

"Yes—he and no other. Will you marry him?"

"Yes," said Zenda quietly and clearly, "I have seen him often and I love him."

Her father laughed.

"Good," he said. "Then it seems that though no words have passed between you, your hearts have spoken. 'Tis for all the world like some old play—only—I won't come in and ruin all things by any ill-advised tyranny, for in this case I am very willing to say:

"'Bless you, my children.' Silly child, don't look so shy, but kiss me and get back to your flowers and studies."

* * * * *

A glorious sunny day has dawned on Rome.

In a large chamber all hung with tapestry, representing in a series of pictures the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin, Zenda stood bathed in the sunshine which poured in at her window.

Anunziata was helping her to dress.

"A plain white dress for the moment, nurse, and my prayer-book, the big black velvet one. I must go to mass as usual at Santa Maria's."

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"For the last time from your father's house, Princess," murmured the old woman sadly.

"But not the last time you will attend me there," said Zenda quickly, "for Filippo—I mean the Duke—has said that I might bring you with me as my maid instead of that Margherita you know of."

"I should hope so, indeed," grumbled Anunziata, "a little flighty thing like that! But, Princess, there goes the bell. We must hasten," and mistress and maid left the palace together.

As they crossed the square to the church, a little page ran up to them with a great basket of roses.

"For the Princess Zenda," he said, "from the Duke of Spolento."

Zenda stooped to take the roses and thanked the pretty child.

"Tell your master it shall deck the altar of Our Lady," she said, and passed on into the church.

Once more, a few hours later, she stood in her big tapestry-hung chamber, a tall figure, dressed in sheeny white and pearls, her trailing draperies standing out in relief against the dark and dingy colours of the wall.

Anunziata fastened the wreath of orange blossoms about her head with a diamond clasp, adjusted the snowy veil, and murmured:

"No fairer bride has ever yet been seen in Rome."

But Zenda stood silent.

It was a joyous day for her, but she stood on the threshold of a new existence, and the knowledge added a touch of gravity to the brilliant beauty of her face, which made it even more beautiful.

At the church, the Cardinal and many other priests were in the Sanctuary, and a gathering of the fashionable world of Rome.

And the bride?

The bride walked to the altar over a pathway of crimson rose-leaves, and many people murmured like old Anunziata:

"Never has been seen a fairer bride in Rome."

The bells rang, the censers gave out their cloud of sweet incense, and presently the Princess Zenda came down the isle—a wife.

Then back to the palace swept the train of wedding guests, where the breakfast was served with all the magnificence the Prince thought fitting on such an occasion as the marriage of his only daughter.

Zenda left the table before her guests, and passing the oratory on her way to her room she went in.

Father Bruno was sitting there as usual conning his breviary.

Zenda went quickly towards him and knelt down.

"*Padre mio*," she said, "give me one more blessing before I take off my bride's dress! How I shall miss you—your daily blessing, your kind words."

The old priest rose and solemnly laying his hands on her head, he blessed her. Zenda stood up and paused a moment to take a last look at the saintly ascetic face.

"Child! Don't look at me like that!" the Padre cried and fell back suddenly in his chair.

"He has fainted," Zenda thought, and ran for help.

The servants came, and after one look at the Padre's face, they hurried their young mistress away, assuring her all would be well—and presently she left her home, the air ringing with "vivas," little dreaming that her old friend was dead.

When she heard, she wrung her hands and said:

"Surely I have a curse upon me."

But, by-and-bye, in her married happiness, and in the birth of her son, she found forgetfulness and peace.

Five years passed by, five years of perfect bliss to Zenda.

Her husband worshipped her and her child, a boy with sunny curls and dimples, and full of fun and laughter, was a daily source of joy.

No shadow fell on her life's pathway; all was sunshine, until one day when the Duchess Zenda was standing on a balcony watching her husband cantering up and down the great courtyard below.

He held their little son upon the saddle before him, carefully encircled with one arm.

The child was laughing gleefully, and as he passed the balcony cried out to his mother:

"On a horse, *mama mia*, come and see!"

Zenda went down the steps leading from the balcony to the court, her white dress trailing behind her, a bunch of roses in her hand—a gracious, beautiful woman, more lovely than ever since her motherhood.

"I come!" she cried, and the Duke reined in his horse.

"How sweet the boy looks," said she; "but be careful, Filippo, he is so small and young!"

"Careful!" he said, "of your child, Zenda—our child!"

He looked down tenderly at his wife, thinking what a picture of loveliness she made standing against the old moss-grown wall in her white dress.

"Do you know how much I love you?" he asked her.

"I am inclined to think—a great deal," she answered. "If I measure your love by mine!" and she looked up at him, all her soul in her face.

"Wife! Don't look at me like that!" he cried.

His voice, so suddenly raised, startled the horse just fresh from the stables; it plunged, reared, then reared again and fell backwards—on Filippo and the child.

* * * * *

In a stately Roman palace lives the widowed Duchess Zenda, save for her servants, all alone. She divides the time between the poor, her books, and her devotions, but never will she hear of any suitor for her hand.

She has the same words to say to one and all:

"Nay, marriage is not for me, or love, or even friendship. Men say I have the Evil Eye, and they make the 'sign' with their hands as I pass them. I do not know what truth there may be in their words, but this I know, that Satan loves to find a lodging in God's fairest temples. They tell me that I am fair! Perchance the Evil One has found a home in my eyes. Those whom I have loved, these eyes have killed—then must I no more love lest I should do more harm. It is a mystery, but God in whom I trust will set all right at last, and when the film of death o'erspreads my eyes, then they will seek and find their dear ones by the light of Heaven."

And one by one her suitors went away.

Some said: "'Tis a sad case." Others: "She is mad."

But old Anunziata stays faithfully beside her, murmuring "Aves" for her mistress all the live-long day.

The stranger passing her palace who asks:

"Tell me, who lives there?" is answered always:

"The Duchess Zenda di Spolento, beautiful to behold, good as an angel, but—your ear, Signor—she has the Evil Eye!"

And the driver crosses himself devoutly and drives on to show the visitor (with much profit to himself) the sights of Rome.

CONSTANCE CRAIGIE HALKETT.

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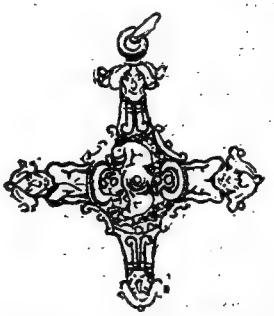
THE DEVIL'S HEIRLOOM



STANDING by the Temple of Victory on the Acropolis of Athens, just as the first glimpse of day was chasing away the blackness of night, were two young men with clean shaven faces, and that general air of breeziness which attaches itself to men who "go down to the sea in ships."

They had stumbled up the grand flight of steps—which still remain fast, although nearly nineteen hundred years have rolled away since human hands built them—to see the sun rise. They were rewarded for their early awakening, for nowhere in the world is there a more gorgeous or awe-inspiring sight.

As the globe of fire slowly lifts itself from the East, the temples and monuments of past greatness become tinged with lurid flame which softens their ruins and accentuates their beauty. Whilst one watches they go through all the changes of the rainbow until at last a pitiless wave of orange light exposes the full devastation wrought by the vandalising hands of Ancient Persians, Turks and Venetians.

The two men had started to come down when their course was arrested by an old woman who lightly touched the arm of the younger.

With the instinctive courtesy and gentleness which was part of his nature he turned to her at once.

"Come along, Ogilvie," said the other, "I don't know how you feel but the thought of breakfast appeals to me at the present moment. The lady is only desirous of selling you a portion of the Temple of Theseus made from the paving stone of modern Athens."

"All right, Wilmot, you go on; I'll catch you up."

Then, as his friend continued the descent Lieutenant Reginald Ogilvie turned to the woman and asked kindly:

"Well, mother, what is it you want?"

First casting a malignant glance at the descending figure, she faced round to the young officer, and said, in good English:

"Your friend was right; your friend was wrong. I have something to sell and something to give. To him who buys, my gift is given."

"Very well, let me see what you have," Ogilvie remarked, his curiosity piqued.

From her pocket the woman produced a good-sized emerald whose green lustre sparkled in the sun and placed it unhesitatingly in Ogilvie's hand.

"Well, is this the article for sale, or the gift?" he queried quizzingly.

"That is for sale, one shilling buys it.'

"Why so cheap?"

"It is part of the price which the last recipient paid for the gift."

"Part! May I ask what the other portion was?"

"Her life."

Ogilvie edged away a little from the woman, beginning to doubt her sanity.

"You think I am mad,' she observed in a quieter tone, "but my mind is as clear as yours. Let me show you the gift."

From another pocket the woman produced a small jewel case, and pressing the spring of the lid disclosed to view a carved cross of different shades of amber. Exquisite and patient workmanship was shown in every detail, the blending of the different shades was perfect: the ornament was unique.

Ogilvie stretched out his hand for it. But the woman drew it back jealously as she said:

"None can touch until they know its power and accept the responsibility its possession demands. Let me tell you part of its history.

"From its maker's hands it passed to Maurice Renault, a French painter of great repute. He wore it as a charm and exactly a month from the day he received it, he was seized by some mysterious malady which baffled the doctors and finally left him a mental and physical wreck. He has never painted since, and never will again. It next passed to Bella Dyson, a countrywoman of your own, who was an actress. Her principal—perhaps only—qualification for her position was her beauty. Three days after she placed it on her beautiful white bosom, a virulent attack of small-pox laid her low. She recovered, but her beauty had gone for ever.

"A father bought it for his only child, the one being in the world that he lived for. She pressed it to her lips and died of lockjaw. In her agony she hurled it from a window of the room she was in, on to the lawn. A tramp, coming up to the house to beg, found it, and considering it treasure-trove conveyed it to the wretched slum he called home. Within a week the inhabitants of that court were struggling in the fearful tortures of typhoid fever. The doctors and scientists said it was the filthy surroundings. Perhaps they aided in the general devastation, but the real cause was the 'Devil's Heirloom.'

"None can possess it without suffering misfortune. Rich and poor, it affects alike. Whatever is of most value to its holder it steals from him. Beauty, talent, wealth, love, position are the tributes it exacts. If you are possessed of none of these or possessing them, value

them not, then it is content to accept your life. But it never takes life when the retention of it can be made a greater curse."

Ogilvie had been listening to the old woman's wild outburst with incredulity written on every line of his face. When she had finished he inquired why she had chosen him as a likely person to whom to pass on the doubtful present.

"Because you are an English sailor, and they are always brave," she answered. "You do not fear its malign influence, do you?" she continued eagerly. "All that I have told you is the myth of a disordered brain, is it not?" and her voice took a wheedling, coaxing tone. "Ask them down there in the town if the old English woman is not mad. They will tell you 'Yes, quite mad. She raves, she wanders in her talk, but she is harmless, quite harmless.' See the pretty bauble," and she waved the cross in front of his eyes. "You will take it and scoff at the wild talk of the madwoman like the brave officer that you are. Will you not? See, it has a pretty ribbon attached. You can slip it round your neck and wear it on your chest always, until you meet the lady you love, then you can give it to her, and she will prize the gift the more because you have worn it. Eh?"

As Reginald sat down to join him, Wilmot commenced to chaff him about the morning adventure. Quite unconcerned at the attack, the victim gave a true and particular account of what had taken place.

"I am afraid, mother, that you are calculating upon arousing the superstition which is generally ascribed to the sailor," answered Ogilvie. "That is old navy—quite obsolete. Nowadays we delight to get under way on a Friday and are positively glad to see rats deserting the ship. When steam took the place of canvas, it also chased away the old beliefs. If you care to sell your cross I will buy it. Not that I believe in the marvellous qualities for good and evil that you may ascribe to it, but because it is beautiful. Now will you take a sovereign for it?"

"Yes! yes!" she answered eagerly. "Give me the money."

"Ah, that was what you wanted," Ogilvie said, as he produced the necessary coin.

"Of course," she answered eagerly as she clutched the money. "Nothing but that. Good morning, brave English officer," and she hobbled down the Great Stair a few steps in front of him, turning at every one to look back with a hideous chuckle of joy breaking from her lips.

As she reached the bottom she waited for him, and once more adopting the wheedling tone begged him to let her place the cross round his neck.

"Oh yes, anything," he answered good-naturedly, anxious to get rid of her. So with wizened hands trembling with excitement, she fastened the ribbon and slipped the cross down behind his collar.

"There was a time when a man would have been delirious with joy if I had offered to do this," she observed as the operation was finished. "I was once known as Bella Dyson, the second victim of the cross that I told you of." Then she hobbled away, this time for good.

"What a wicked old yarn-pitcher," thought Ogilvie. "Of course it was only the money she wanted."

Perhaps he would have changed his mind on that point if he could have seen her contemptuously fling the coin he had given her to the first beggar with whom she came into contact.

When Ogilvie returned to the hotel which he and Wilmot had made their headquarters whilst on leave, he found the latter gentleman doing ample justice to the breakfast. As Reginald sat down to join him, Wilmot commenced to chaff him about the morning adventure. Quite unconcerned at the attack, the victim gave a true and particular account of what had taken place, which had the effect of sending Wilmot into a still greater explosion of mirth.

"My dear Reg," he managed to ejaculate between his outbursts, "your ingenuous 'phiz' makes you the victim of every lying guide and relic-seller who infests the ports at which *H.M.S. Beetle* makes a call."

"Maybe," retorted Ogilvie in a rather aggrieved tone, "but you must admit that on this occasion I have not done so badly. An emerald and a specimen of workmanship such as that cross are not dear at a guinea—are they?"

"No, I suppose not," agreed his comrade and there the matter ended.

Within six hours after their breakfast was finished they were watching the fast receding shores of Greece from the quarter deck of the *Beetle* as she steamed away with the remainder of the Fleet *en route* for Malta.

The first division of the Mediterranean Fleet had been on their usual cruise previous to settling down in Malta for a general over-haul and re-fitting, and England's principal naval base in the Mediterranean was full of excitement at the prospect of once more welcoming back that branch of the service which represents a goodly percentage of the necessary funds whereby the Maltese supply their simple wants.

But it was not only the ancient owners of the soil who were overjoyed. There were several English ladies who had willingly shared their husbands' exile from England, content to see them for the few months in the year which their ships spent in Malta. Amongst these was Mrs. Wilmot, the wife of Commander Wilmot of *H. M. S. Beetle* and with her, was Miss Wilmot, her husband's sister.

For two years Gertrude Wilmot had been engaged to Reginald Ogilvie and it was whispered that as soon as the *Beetle's* commission was finished the lady would change her name. Be that as it might we need hardly say that her face was perceptibly brighter when she remembered that within a few more hours she would be clasped in the arms of her lover.

At last from the signal station on the cliffs the Fleet was sighted. The news ran through the town like wild-fire and when the ships steamed majestically into the vast harbour to their respective moorings half the population of the Island were gathered on the quays to greet them, and the other half were dotted about on the water in "disos," as the Maltese boats are called, for a like purpose.

It was a pretty sight, quite apart from the commercial and love interests involved.

With the scarlet and blue-coated guard drawn up on the quarter-deck, and the hands not actually engaged in the mooring operations mustered at their respective quarters, ship after ship passed through the entrance to the accompaniment of cheers from the populace and booming of the guns firing the requisite salutes.

Now and then a too venturesome "diso" would get in the way of one of the warships and then an unearthly whoop from the leviathan's siren would rend the air as a warning and the offending boat promptly got to a safe distance, the sightseers in it no doubt heaving a sigh of contentment as the vast ship safely passed them.

As soon as their duties would admit Wilmot and Ogilvie hurried ashore to the ladies who were anxiously awaiting them.

Only four months had passed since they met, but to those who have dear ones exposed to the dangers of the sea the months seemed years, the days weeks.

However, when the Fleet is at Malta the ladies contrive to see a lot of their menfolk. There are afternoon receptions on the ships, official and social gatherings ashore, drives to Cettia Vecchia, an inland town, or the Roman Villa.

It was about a week after Reginald's return that the first discordant note was struck in the lover's perfect happiness.

They had been for a drive together, and on the way home Reggie had complained of a bad headache. When they arrived home Gertrude insisted upon his lying down whilst she bathed his forehead with eau de Cologne. In spite of this he gradually got worse, and at last they got him to bed and sent for a doctor.

A brief examination satisfied the medical man, and then the verdict went forth—Lieutenant Reginald Ogilvie was down with a bad attack of typhoid fever.

Contrary to the advice of everybody Gertrude insisted upon nursing him. She was a girl of strong individuality, and maintained that her place was by the sick bedside of the man who was to be her husband.

Then followed days of anxiety whilst the fell disease got to its height, and Reggie's life trembled on the border line between life and death.

But at last his splendid constitution triumphed and it was known that in all probability he would recover.

It was just after the crucial point had been passed that one of Mrs. Wilmot's servants was stopped in the street by an old woman who questioned her closely upon the condition of the young officer.

After hearing the good news the questioner pressed some coins in the girl's hand and said, eagerly.

"Is he rich, this Lieutenant Ogilvie?"

"No," answered the girl. "I believe he has very little besides his pay, but he is to marry Miss Wilmot who has a large fortune of her own."

"Not rich and not to die," muttered the old woman. "Can it have lost its efficacy at last. Impossible! And yet this man does not die, and has no fortune to lose. Tell me," she said out aloud. "Have you nursed him? Have you seen him? Does he wear on his breast an amber cross?"

The girl rather alarmed at the woman's vehemence began to move off. The woman moved after her and clutched her arm and again put her questions in a somewhat quieter tone, at the same time pressing a sovereign into the girl's hands.

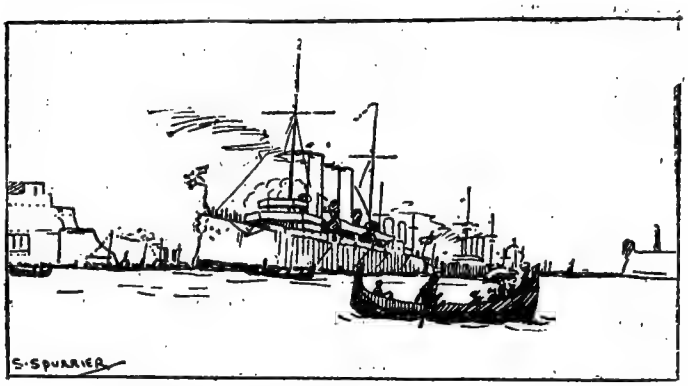
"He has a blue ribbon round his neck. I saw it the other day when I made his bed. Perhaps the cross is attached to that," answered the girl.

"He wears it still and yet recovers. What does it mean?" muttered the woman as she hobbled away.

The servant on her return to the house did not mention her encounter with the woman as her conscience rather pricked her for the way she had talked of the affairs of her master's guest.

That night the mysterious cross again changed its owner.

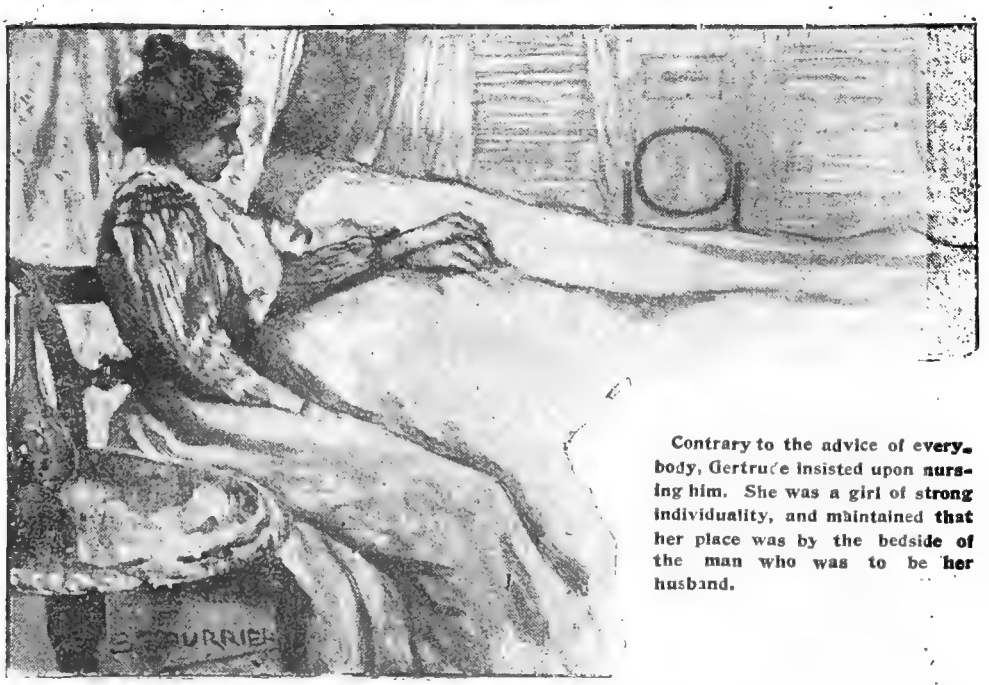
Gertrude had of course seen it during the time she had been at the bedside of the sick



With the scarlet and blue-coated guard drawn up on the quarter-deck, and the hands not actually engaged in the mooring operations mustered at their respective quarters, ship after ship passed through the entrance to the accompaniment of cheers from the populace, and booming of the guns firing the requisite salutes.

man and wondered why he should wear it. She questioned him gently about it, half thinking that it might have some tender associations.

He had nearly forgotten the circumstances under which he had obtained it. The vendor's behaviour at the time had made some slight impression upon him, but the moment after he had dismissed her wild talk as the ravings of a madwoman. He had worn the yellow cross purely from motives of the utmost contempt for the old woman's jargon. The superstition that surrounded the ornament, had only excited the latent controversy in his nature at the time, and needless to say he did not attribute his late illness in the slightest degree to the charm. Consequently he saw no reason why he should not give it to Gertrude as she admired it, and accordingly he did so.



Contrary to the advice of everybody, Gertrude insisted upon nursing him. She was a girl of strong individuality, and maintained that her place was by the bedside of the man who was to be her husband.

After the transfer of the cross Ogilvie made rapid strides towards convalescence and within two months had quite regained his health and strength and was able to resume his duties on the ship.

The Fleet was by now in full preparation for the forthcoming cruise and the officers and crew of the *Beetle* were in high fettle because this would be the last one before they returned to England to "pay off."

Two days before they were to leave Mrs. and Miss Wilmot took passage in a P. and O. liner for England, so that they would be there to greet Wilmot and Ogilvie when they arrived.

The two men went to see the ladies off and almost the last words that Gertrude Wilmot said were to the effect that she should wear the cross Reggie had given her next to her heart till they met again.

The two men stood watching the liner until she was hull-down, then turned to go. Wilmot had to proceed on board at once but Ogilvie was free to stay ashore for a few hours.

He decided to utilise the time for a walk.

After he had strolled round Valetta for a time he made his way to the San Antonio Gardens and reaching them sat down on a seat to rest. He had been there a few minutes when a shadow crossed him, and looking up he saw that an old woman was standing in front of him. There was something familiar about her, and he tried to remember where he had seen her before.

Then there suddenly flashed across his memory that scene on the Acropolis of Athens, and a vague feeling of uneasiness took possession of him.

"I have come again, brave officer," said the woman at last, in a mocking tone.

"That fact is rather obvious," he replied in a jocular tone which belied his feelings.

"You have been ill?" she said, narrowly examining his face.

"Yes, but am quite strong again now, thank you." And he rose and stretched himself as though to corroborate his words.

"You are fortunate. The cross is not usually content with a few weeks' illness."

"Stop that nonsense," he cried angrily, remembering in whose hands the cross at present was.

"It is not nonsense. But that is not the point. I have come to buy it back. I will give you treble what you gave me."

"Even if I were willing to sell it to you I could not. It has left my hands. I have given it to the lady who is to be my wife."

"You have given it to her," the woman repeated slowly. "Then I do not want it back. At least not yet."

"What do you mean?" he said hoarsely.

"I mean that the cross will yet exact its penalty," she replied enigmatically.

A great wave of doubt swept across his mind, and he seized her roughly by the shoulders and shook her.

"Don't talk in riddles, woman, tell me outright what you mean," he almost screamed.

"I mean," she said calmly, releasing herself from his grip, "that she will die."

Then her voice lost its calmness and she seemed to tower above the stricken man like some evil genius as she reiterated in triumphant tones. "She will die! She will die! The cross always takes what is loved best. It spared your life because there was something nearer

and dearer to you that it wanted. At one fell swoop you will lose her and her fortune. It never fails. It never fails. You cannot get it back for she has gone to England. She is on the sea now, perhaps wearing the cross on her white neck."

"You are mad, woman!" he exclaimed with an attempt to reassure himself.

"Do I speak like a madwoman?" she retorted. "Think of what happened to you. You recovered from an illness which came to you, after your life was despaired of. Why? Because the cross did not need you, it wanted her. She is dearer to you than life. The mere fact of living is worthless to you without her. It did not take my life, but took my beauty. It did not take Maurice Renault's life, but took the cunning of his hand—remember he painted no more. Listen, and accept your fate. She will die! She will die!"

With the triumphant words of the woman ringing in his ears the wretched man tore through the gardens like a madman.

At the gate he hired a conveyance and drove down to the quay. On the way down he tried to compose his thoughts. No doubt remained in his mind that some danger unknown, unseen, but all the more terrible on that account, lurked in the cross, and the woman he loved would, in a few hours, be placing it next to her tender body; and he was powerless to save her.

The only thing that could possibly overtake the liner was one of the swift torpedo destroyers attached to the Fleet. If only he could obtain one of these he might yet overtake the liner in time. As he reached the quay he saw one with steam up, and a wild desire to go aboard, set her engines going, and dash out of the harbour seized him, but he cast it aside as folly. As he stepped into the *Beetle's* boat which was waiting, he asked the coxswain if he knew where the torpedo catcher was off to.

"To Gib, with dispatches, I believe, sir," answered the man as he saluted.

To Gibraltar, the first port at which the liner would touch. It was maddening. Just a little extra pressure on her engines would enable her to catch up, and pass the liner, and he was powerless.

"The Captain was asking for you, sir, just before we left, and the Commander said would you get aboard as soon as possible," said the cox, interrupting his painful thoughts.

"Very well. Shove off at once," said Ogilvie.

When they reached the *Beetle* Wilmot met him at the gangway, and said:

"The Captain wants to see you at once, Ogilvie. Belson of No. 36 is ill, and she is to go to Gib with dispatches. The Admiral made a signal that we are to supply an officer to take charge in his place, and you are the one the Captain has chosen. I have told your servant to get your chest packed."

Ogilvie's heart gave a bound. No. 36 was the torpedo-destroyer which the cox of the boat had spoken of. Providence had intervened in his behalf. There was yet a chance of his being able to reach Gertrude before the cross could effect the fell work which the old woman claimed it would.

It did not take him long to interview the Captain. He was to proceed at once to the flagship to receive his instructions from the Admiral.

His servant, thanks to Wilmot's instructions, had already got his uniform out, and his chest stood ready packed in the gangway.

A few minutes more, and he was being rowed to the flag-ship.

The Admiral's instructions were brief and to the point. Ogilvie was to proceed with the utmost dispatch to Gibraltar, and hand over the documents to the officer in charge of the dockyard.

Gertrude Wilmot was waiting in the gangway to receive him, and he pushed past the passengers and officers to her side. "The cross—you are not wearing it, darling?" he whispered.

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"It is very necessary that the dispatch should be in his hands as soon as possible, so do not hesitate to use the coal," was the Admiral's last order. And Ogilvie, as he saluted, mentally resolved that Torpedo Destroyer No 36 should not belie her reputation as a "Flier." Within the half-hour, the torpedo destroyer was steaming out of the harbour. Once clear she was let go at full speed, and the island began to sink astern.

To Ogilvie it was a race, with life or death as the goal.

At the rate of thirty knots she tore through the sea, cutting a path for herself in the water, and tossing spray and waves over her steel deck.

Every man of her small crew knew that something extraordinary was happening, and every nerve and sinew was strained to get the best out of the slender vessel.

Down below in the stoke hole the stokers piled on coals beneath the throbbing boilers, their nerves strung up and the thumping of their hearts keeping time with the pulsating machinery. Never before had the boat moved as it was doing now.

For twenty-four hours the wild race was kept up and then at last the liner loomed up before them.

Rapidly they overhauled her, signalling her to stop.

Time is money on a liner, but her captain knew that it must be a matter of vital importance so he slowed down and Ogilvie went aboard, the liner and torpedo destroyer continuing their voyage in company, so that no time was wasted.

Gertrude Wilmot was waiting in the gangway to receive him and he pushed past the passengers and officers to her side.

"The cross—you are not wearing it, darling?" he whispered.

"Yes," she answered reproachfully. "Did I not promise that I would?"

"Yes, I know, dearest, and will explain later. But for God's sake take it off and bring it to me!"

While she had gone to her cabin Ogilvie made his way to the fore-bridge, there to apologise and explain to the liner's captain.

That gentleman was inclined to be sceptical as to the power of the cross, but suggested that the ship's doctor should examine it.

When the worthy medico received it, his first action was to chip a small portion off and place it under a powerful microscope. He had scarcely applied his eye to the glass when he sprang back with a cry of horrow.

"Good Heavens, man, you were right," he exclaimed. "There is enough typhoid bacilli in this tiny fragment to kill a dozen men."

With every precaution other fragments were chipped off and examined, and bacilli of every known contagious disease were discovered. Some fiend incarnate with an intense hatred against his fellow human beings had introduced the deadly microbes into the innocent-looking ornament. The warmth of a person's body would excite them to do their deadly work.

When this had been explained to Ogilvie he had an objection to raise to it.

"But I thought amber was a petrified gum which would not be susceptible to the comparatively small amount of heat which would emanate from a person's body," he said.

"This material is not amber," answered the doctor, "but a resinous gum which might easily be mistaken for it by the uninitiated."

"But the woman from whom I got it. How was it that she was not stricken down?"

"She was once, according to her own account, and no doubt she took particular care that it did not touch her flesh after. I should not imagine that she really knew the secret of its composition, but looked upon it as having some supernatural powers."

"Do you think Miss Wilmot will suffer any evil effects?"

"That is impossible to say; but it will be my especial care to closely watch for any signs, and rest assured we shall nip them in the bud."

Thanks to the precautions taken by the doctor and also probably to the fact that the cross had only rested on her neck for such a comparatively short time, no evil effects resulted to Gertrude. But Ogilvie had a most anxious time during the remainder of the torpedo-destroyer's journey to Gibraltar; and indeed until a cable reached him from Gertrude, to the effect that she had arrived in England, in good health.

The real maker of the "Devil's Heirloom" was never discovered; for the old woman when found was in a dying condition, and she went to her grave with the secret, if she ever knew it, wrapped in her own breast. In spite of her assertion to the contrary she was no doubt partially insane, driven so, by the terrible disaster brought on by the cross. Her mania had taken the awful form of passing on the cross to innocent people; and when its fatal work was done, regaining possession of it. She had ample means so that she was enabled to travel about, with this object in view.

MARTIN-HARRY.

SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of W. Pett Ridge's "Three Women and Mr. Cardwell," to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source must be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. A. Hutton, of 3 Lapage Street, Bradford. Attempts for this week's prize may deal with any subject, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, January 15th. Post-cards only, please.

The Paper Wouldn't Work.

A DETACHMENT of the men of the Ordnance Survey were at work in a certain district. One man had got into a field, and, on seeing the intruder climb the wall, the farmer went up to him, and the following dialogue ensued:

Farmer: "Hey, lad, out of this!"

Surveyor: "Oh, no; I have a right to go anywhere, and if you will not believe me I will show you my Government paper."

"You'll 'ave to go," persisted the farmer.

"No, I shan't!" was the reply.

The farmer went round to his sheds, which opened upon the field, and let out a vicious bovine of the masculine gender.

The bull went for the official, and he in turn did his level best to beat the record in a race to the wall, whilst the farmer, mounting a gate, yelled out to him as he fled: "Show it the Government paper, you silly!"

A Reasonable Request.

"Go to bed, sir, in the cupboard there," said an enraged Scotch father to his son, who had given him just cause of offence. "Were it not that these gentlemen are present I would give you a sound whipping, but you shall have it before breakfast to-morrow, certain."

The little rebel went to his crib with a heavy heart, and the enjoyments of the party continued until a late hour.

Just when the party was about to break up, the cupboard door was quietly pulled back, and the young offender put out his head, requesting that the sentence might be put into execution.

"Father, would ye just gie me my liks this night, for I canna sleep without them?"

"W.H.S.B."

AN inspector in one of the schools under the West Ham School Board, during an inspection, had been very pleased with the answers of the scholars in a certain class. Thinking to put a poser, he asked what the four letters "W.H.S.B." stood for, after printing them on a blackboard.

No answer for some time. At last, a sharp scholar put up a hand to reply.

"Well?" said the inspector.

"What Ho! She Bumps!" was the unexpected solution, to the great amusement of everybody.

Following Instructions.

THE boy hung back when the visitor spoke to him, and his mother was, naturally, annoyed.

"Won't you go to Mrs. Brown, Willie?" she said.

"No," replied the boy shortly.

"Don't you like me?" asked Mrs. Brown good-naturedly.

"No, I don't," answered the boy.

"Why, Willie?" exclaimed his mother reproachfully.

"Well, I got beaten for not telling the truth yesterday, and I don't mean to be to-day," protested the boy.

Very Rough.

AN Irishman had the misfortune to be commandeered by the Boers, and compelled to fight against the British, much to his disgust.

His first experience of the campaign was anything but cheerful. He was marched for hours in a pouring rain over an extremely desolate tract of country. Sometimes he was up to his knees in water and mire, sometimes barking his shins against rocks and stones, or stumbling into some hole.

Presently, he deliberately turned his back and began a retrogade movement.

"Here, where are you going?" cried a field cornet to him.

"Home!" scornfully retorted Pat. "Bedad, a country like this ain't worth fightin' for."

And home he went.

Common Sense.

RECENTLY, while travelling in Germany, an Englishman was observed to be constantly putting his head out of the window. The train was going fast, and a sudden gust of wind blew off his hat.

With an exclamation he took down his hat-box, and hurled it after his hat. Then he sat down and smiled on his fellow-passengers, but did not speak.

The Germans roared with laughter, and one of them exclaimed:

"You don't expect your hat-box to bring your hat, do you?"

"I do," said the Englishman. "No name on the hat, full name and hotel address on the box. They will be found together, and I shall get both. Do you see now?"

Then those Germans subsided, and said they always had considered the English a great and practical nation.

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The Countess was her Father.

AT a certain party a young man was introduced to a lady, whom he understood to be the daughter of the Countess of Ayr.

By-and-bye he ventured to ask after her mother, the Countess.

"My father, you mean," said the lady (her mother being dead).

"No—no—no," said the bewildered youth, "I was asking after your mother, the Countess of Ayr."

"Yes," was the reply, "but that's my father."

Whereupon the young man rushed off and told his hostess that the young lady must be quite mad, as she told him the Countess of Ayr was her father.

"So he is," answered the hostess, "let me introduce you to him. He is Mr. Smith, the county surveyor."

Perfectly Correct.

A YOUNG minister, in the course of an eloquent sermon on the pomps and vanities of the world, staggered his congregation by exclaiming:

"Here am I standing preaching to you with only half a shirt on my back, while you sit there covered with gewgaws and other baubles."

The next day a parcel containing several brand new shirts was left at his house by one of his hearers, a kind-hearted old lady. Meeting the donor a few days afterwards, he thanked her exceedingly, but expressed much surprise at receiving such an unexpected gift.

"Oh!" said the lady, "you mentioned in your sermon that you had only half a shirt on your back."

"Quite true," added his reverence, "but you seem to forget that the other half was in front."

One to the Plumber.

A PLUMBER was sent to the house of a wealthy merchant to make repairs. He was taken by the butler into the dining-room, and was beginning his work, when the lady of the house entered.

"John," said she, with a suspicious glance towards the plumber, "remove the silver from the sideboard, and lock it up at once."

But the man of lead was in no wise disconcerted.

"Tom," said he to his apprentice, who accompanied him, "take my watch and chain and these coppers home to my missus at once; there seem to be shady people about this house."

A Complete Vengeance.

AT a certain theatre, not long ago, a gentleman who gets murdered in the first act, and who subsequently turns up as foreman of the jury, was dissatisfied at the rate of stipendiary emolument wherewith his efforts were rewarded. Being unable to obtain redress, he vowed vengeance.

So the next night, when in the course of the trial in Act IV. the man who had done the deed denied all knowledge of it in the stirring words allotted to him by the collaborators, the foreman of the jury upset the calculations of everybody in the theatre by rising solemnly, and saying:

"I tell you, Simpson, you *did* do it. I ought to know, for I'm the very man you killed; and it's the last time you'll do it, sir, at the price I'm paid at present." Curtain.

He Didn't Pay.

AN old Scotsman, not feeling well, called upon a doctor. The doctor gave him some verbal instructions as to how to regulate his diet, advising him, among other things, to drink no spirits for a time.

The Scotsman rose to leave, when the doctor said:

"I am in the way of charging for my advice. I will trouble you for half-a-crown."

"Oh, maybe," said the patient, "but I'm no gaun to tak' yer advice!"

Why the Goods were Broken.

PAT MALONY was nailing a box which he intended sending by rail. It was essential that the box should not be inverted during the passage, and a friend ventured to suggest to Pat to write conspicuously on the case:

"This side up, with care."

A few days afterwards seeing Pat, he asked:

"Heard any more about your goods? Did they get there safely?"

"Every one of them broke," said Pat.

"The whole lot? Did you label it 'this side up,' as I told you?"

"Yes, I did. And for fear they shouldn't see it on the cover, I put it on the bottom."

After the Opera.

EXCITED AUDITOR: "I declare, I never saw such wretchedly bad taste—such a scandalous violation of the dramatic unities—such an outrage on all sense of propriety!"

Friend: "What's the matter, old man? Some of 'em been gagging again?"

Excited Auditor: "Gagging isn't a circumstance to it. The opera was *William Tell*—a grand thing, you know — and just as the curtain rose on the scene displaying the hat of the tyrant Gesler on a pole, to which the hero refuses to bow, what does that wretched orchestra do but strike up 'Where did you get that hat?' Destroyed all the romantic illusion of the piece. Soulless brutes!"

The King and the Seidlitz Powders.

ON the first consignment of seidlitz powders reaching the capital of Delhi the monarch was deeply interested in the accounts of their refreshing qualities. A box was brought to the King in full Court, and the interpreter explained how they should be used.

Into a goblet he put the contents of twelve blue papers, and having added water the King drank it off. This was the alkali, and the royal countenance expressed no sign of satisfaction.

It was then explained that in the combination of the two powders lay the luxury; so the twelve white powders were quickly dissolved in water, and as eagerly swallowed by his Majesty with a shriek that will be remembered while Delhi exists.

The monarch rose, staggered, exploded, and in his full agonies screamed, "Hold me down!" then rushing from the throne, fell prostrate on the floor. There he lay during the long-continued effervescence of the compound, spurting like ten thousand pennyworths of Imperial pop, and believing himself in the agonies of death—a melancholy and humiliating proof that kings are mortal.

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THE ANGEL OF THE REVOLUTION

By GEORGE GRIFFITH

CHAPTER LVI.

The Coming of the Bride.

The isolated building near which the *Ithuriel* had come to rest was used ostensibly as a shooting and hunting-box by Michael Roburoff and a couple of his friends, and in reality as a meeting-place for the Inner Circle or Executive Council of the American Section of the Brotherhood. This Section was, numerically speaking, the most important of the four branches into which the Outer Circle of the Brotherhood was divided—that is to say, the British, Continental, American, and Colonial Sections.

All told, the Terrorists had rather more than five million adherents in America and Canada, of whom more than four millions were men in the prime of life and nearly all of Anglo-Saxon blood and English speech. All these men were not only armed but trained in the use of fire-arms to a high degree of skill. Their organisation, which had gradually grown up with the Brotherhood for twenty years, was known to the world only under the guise of the different forms of industrial unionism, but behind these there was a perfect system of discipline and command which the outer world had never even suspected.

The Section was divided first into squads of ten under the command of an eleventh who alone knew the leaders of the other squads in his neighbourhood. Ten of these squads made a company commanded by one man who was only known to the squad-captains, and who alone knew the captains of the regiment, which was composed of ten companies.

The next step in the organisation was the brigade, consisting of ten regiments, the captains of which alone knew the commander of the brigade, while the commanders of the brigades, were alone acquainted with the members of the Inner Circle or Executive Council which managed the affairs of the whole Section, and whose Chief was the only man in the Section who could hold any communication with the Inner Circle of the Brotherhood itself, which, under the immediate command of Natas, governed the whole organisation throughout the world.

This description will serve for all the Sections, as all were modelled upon exactly the same plan. The advantages of such an organisation will at once be obvious. In the first place, no member of the rank and file could possibly betray more than ten of his fellows, including his captain, while his treachery could, if necessary, be made known in a few hours to ten thousand others, not one of whom he knew, and thus it would be impossible for him to escape the invariable death penalty. The same is, of course, equally true of the captains and the commanders.

On the other hand, the system was equally convenient for the transmission of orders from head-quarters. An order given to ten commanders of brigades could, in a single night, be transmitted individually to the whole of the Section, and yet those in command of the various divisions would not know whence the orders came, save as regards their immediate superiors.

It will be necessary for the reader to bear these few particulars in mind in order to understand future developments which, without them, might seem to border on the impossible. It is only necessary to add that the full fighting strength of the four Sections of the Brotherhood amounted to about twelve millions of men, a considerable proportion of whom were serving as soldiers in the armies of the League and the Alliance, and that in its cosmopolitan aspect it was known to the rank and file as the Red International, whose members knew each other only by the possession of a little knot of red ribbon tied into the button-hole in a peculiar fashion on occasions of meetings for instruction or drill.

The three lights burning in the form of a triangle in the window of the house were a pre-arranged signal to avoid mistake on the part of those on board the air-ship. When they reached the earth Arnold, acting under the instructions of Tremayne, who was his superior on land though his voluntary subordinate when afloat, left the *Ithuriel* and her crew in charge of Lieutenant Marston and Andrew Smith, the coxswain.

The remainder disembarked, and then the air-ship rose from the ground and ascended out of sight through a layer of clouds that hung some eight hundred feet above the high ground of the hills. Lieutenant Marston's orders were to remain out of sight for an hour and then return.

Arnold had not seen Natasha for several hours previous to the landing, and he noticed with wonder, by no means unmixed with something very like anger, that she looked a great deal more cheerful than she had done during the voyage. She had preserved her composure all through, but the effort of restraint had been visible. Now this had vanished, although the supreme hour of the sacrifice that her father had commanded her to make was actually at hand. When her feet touched the earth she looked round with a smile on her lips and a flush on her cheeks, and said, in a voice in which there was no perceptible trace of anxiety or suffering:

"So this is the place of my bridal, is it? Well, I must say that a more cheerful one might have been selected, yet perhaps, after all, such a gloomy spot is more suitable to the ceremony. Come along, I suppose the bridegroom will be anxiously waiting the coming of the bride. I wonder what sort of a reception I shall have. Come, my Lord of Alanmere, your arm, and you, Captain Arnold, bring the Princess. We have a good deal to do before it gets light."

These were strange words to be uttered by a girl who but a few hours before had voluntarily confessed her love for one man and was on the eve of compulsorily giving herself up to another one. Had it been anyone else but Natasha Arnold could have felt only disgust, but his love made it impossible for him to believe her guilty of such unworthy lightness as her words bespoke, even on the plain evidence

before him, so he simply choked back his anger as best he might, and followed towards the house speechless with astonishment at the marvellous change that had come over the daughter of Natas.

Tremayne knocked in a peculiar fashion on the window, and then repeated the knock on the door, which was opened almost immediately.

"Who stands there?" asked a voice in French.

"Those who bring the expected bride," replied Tremayne in German.

"And by whose authority?" This time the question was in Spanish.

"In the Master's name," said Tremayne in English.

"Enter! you are welcome."

A second door was now opened inside the house, and through it a light shone into the passage. The four visitors entered, and, passing through the second door, found themselves in a plainly-furnished room, down the centre of which ran a long table, flanked by five chairs on each side, in each of which, save one, sat a masked and shrouded figure exactly similar to those which Arnold had seen when he was first introduced to the Council Chamber in the house on Clapham Common. In a chair at one end of the table sat another figure similarly draped.

The door was closed as they entered, and the member of the Circle who had let them in returned to his seat. No word was spoken until this was done. Then Natasha, leaving her three companions by the door, advanced alone to the lower end of the table.

As she did so Arnold for the first time noticed that she carried her magazine pistol in a sheath at her belt. He and Tremayne were, as a matter of course, armed with a brace of these weapons, but this was the first time that he had ever seen Natasha carry her pistol openly. Wondering greatly what this strange sign might mean, he waited with breathless anxiety for the drama to begin.

As Natasha took her stand at the opposite end of the table, the figure in the chair at the top rose and unmasked, disclosing the pallid countenance of the Chief of the American Section. He looked to Arnold anything but a bridegroom awaiting his bride and the ceremony which was to unite him to her for ever. His cheeks and lips were bloodless, and his eyes wandered restlessly from Natasha to Tremayne and back again. He glanced to and fro in silence for several moments, and when he at last found his voice he said, in half-choked, broken accents:

"What is this? Why am I honoured by the presence of the Chief and the Admiral of the Air? I asked only that if the Master consented to grant my humble petition in reward for my services, the daughter of Natas should come attended simply by a sister of the Brotherhood and the messenger that I sent."

They let him finish, although it was with manifest difficulty that he stammered to the end of his speech. Arnold, still wondering at the strange turn events had taken, saw Tremayne's lips tighten and his brows contract in the effort to repress a smile. The other masked figures at the table moved restlessly in their seats, and glanced from one to another. Seeing this, Tremayne stepped quickly forward to Natasha's side, and said in a stern, commanding tone:

"I am the Chief of the Central Council, and I command everyone here to keep his seat and remain silent until the daughter of Natas has spoken."

The ten masked and hooded heads instantly bowed consent. Then Tremayne stepped back again, and Natasha spoke. There was a keen, angry light in her eyes, and a bright flush upon her cheek, but her voice was smooth and silvery and in strange contrast to the words that she used, almost to the end.

Did you think, Michael Roburoff, that the Master of the Terror would send his daughter to her bridal so poorly escorted as you say? Surely that would have been almost as much a slight as you put upon me when, instead of coming to woo me as a true lover should have done, you contented yourself with sending a messenger as though you were some Eastern potentate despatching an envoy to demand the hand of the daughter of a vassal.

"It would seem that this sudden love which you do me the honour to profess for me has destroyed your manners as well as your reason. But since you have assumed so high a dignity it is not seemly that you should stand to hear what I have to say; sit down, for it looks as though standing were a trouble to you."

Michael Roburoff, who by this time could scarcely support himself on his trembling limbs, sank suddenly back into his chair and covered his face with his hands.

"That is not very lover-like to cover your eyes when the bride that you have asked for is standing in front of you, but as long as you don't cover your ears as well I will forgive you the slight. Now listen.

"I have come, as you see, and I have brought with me the answer of the Master to your request. Until an hour ago I did not know what it was myself, for, like the rest of the faithful members of the Brotherhood, I obey the word of the Master blindly.

"You, as it would appear, maddened by what you are pleased to call your love for me, have dared to attempt to make terms where you swore to obey blindly to the death. You have dared to place me, the daughter of Natas, in the balance against the allegiance of the American Section on the eve of the supreme crisis of its work, thus imperilling the results of twenty years of labour.

"If you had not been mad you would have foreseen the results of such treachery. As it is you must learn them now. What I have said has been proved by your own hand, and the proof is here in the hand of the Chief. This is the answer of Natas to the servant who would have betrayed him in the hour of trial.'

She took a folded paper from her belt as she spoke, and, unfolding it, read in clear, deliberate tones:

> "Michael Roburoff, late chief of the American Section of the Brotherhood. When you joined the Order, you took an oath to obey the directions of its chiefs to the death, and you acknowledged that death would be the just penalty of perjury. My orders to you were to complete the arrangements for bringing the American Section into action when you received the signal to do so. Instead of doing that, you have sought to bargain with me for the price of its allegiance. That is treachery, and the penalty of treachery is death.
>
> "NATAS."

"Those are the words of the Master," continued Natasha, throwing the paper down upon the table with one hand, and drawing her pistol with the other. "It rests with the Chief to say when and where the sentence of the Master shall be carried out."

"Let it be carried out here and now," said Tremayne, "and let him who has anything to say against it speak now or for ever hold his peace."

The ten heads bowed once more in silence, and Natasha went on, still addressing the trembling wretch who sat huddled in the chair in front of her.

"You have asked for a bride, Michael Roburoff, and she has come to you, and I can promise you that you shall sleep soundly in her embrace. Your bride is Death, and I have chosen to bring her to you with my own hand that all here may see how the daughter of Natas can avenge an insult to her womanhood.

"You have been guilty of treachery to the Brotherhood and for that you might have been punished by any hand, but you would also have condemned me to the infamy of a loveless marriage, and that is an insult that no one shall punish but myself. Look up, and, if you can, die like a man."

Roburoff took his hands from his face, and with an inarticulate cry started to his feet. The same instant Natasha's hand went up, her pistol flashed, and he dropped back again

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into his chair with a bullet in his brain. Then she replaced the pistol in her belt, and going up to Arnold held out both her hands and said as he clasped them in his own:

"If the Master's reply had been different that bullet would by this time have been in my own heart."

CHAPTER LVII.

The Capture of a Continent.

Within an hour after the execution of Michael Roburoff the *Ithuriel* was winging her way back to Aeria, and at least two of her company were anticipating their return to the valley with feelings very different from those with which they had contemplated their departure.

When the last farewells and congratulations had been spoken, and the air-ship rose from the earth, Tremayne returned to the house to commence forthwith the great task which now devolved upon him, for in addition to being Chief of the Central Executive, he now assumed the direct command of the American Section, which, after long consideration, had been selected as the nucleus of the Federation of the English-speaking peoples of the world.

For a fortnight he worked almost night and day, attending to every detail with the utmost care, and bringing into play all those rare powers of mind which in the first instance had led Natas to select him as the visible head of the Executive. In this way the chief consequence of the love-madness of Roburoff had been to place at the head of affairs in America the one man of all others most fitted by descent and ability to carry out such a work, and to this fact its complete success must in a great measure be attributed.

So perfectly were his plans laid and executed, that right up to the moment when the signal was given and the plans became actions, American society went about its daily business without the remotest suspicion that it was living on the slope of a slumbering volcano whose fires were so soon to burst forth and finally consume the social fabric which, despite its splendid exterior, was inwardly as rotten as were those of Rome and Byzantium on the eve of their fall.

On the 1st of October the cables brought the news of the fall of the Quadrilateral, the storming of Hamburg, and the retreat of the British forces on Antwerp. Four days later came the tidings of a great battle under the walls of Antwerp, in which the British and German forces, outnumbered ten to one by the innumerable hosts of the League, had suffered a decisive defeat which rendered it imperative for them to fall back upon the Allied Fleets in the Scheldt, and to leave the Netherlands to the mercy of the Czar and his allies, who were thus undisputed masters of the continent of Europe.

This last and crowning victory had been achieved by exactly the same means which had accomplished all the other triumphs of the campaign, and therefore there will be no need to enter into any detailed description of it. Indeed, the fall of the Quadrilateral and the defeat of the last army of the Alliance round Antwerp would have been accomplished much more easily and speedily than it had been but for the fact that the weather, which had been fine up to the end of July, had suddenly broken, and a succession of violent storms and gales from the north and north-west had made it impossible for the war-balloons to be brought into action with any degree of effectiveness.

During the last week of September the storms had ceased and then the work of destruction began. Not even the hitherto impregnable fortresses of Tournay, Mons, Namur, and Liege, had been able to withstand the assault from the air any better than the forts of Berlin, or the walls of Constantinople. A day's bombardment had sufficed to reduce them to ruins, and, the chain once broken, the armies of the League swept in wave after wave across the plains which they had guarded.

The loss of life had been unparalleled even in this, the greatest of all wars, for the British and Germans had fought with a dogged resolution which, but for the vastly superior numbers and the irresistible means of destruction employed against them, must have infallibly triumphed. As it was it was only when valour had achieved its last sacrifice, and further resistance became rather madness than devotion, that the retreat was finally sounded in time to embark the remnants of the armies of the Alliance on board the war-ships. Happily at the very hour when this was being done the weather broke again, and the ships of the allied fleets were therefore able to make their way to sea through storm and darkness unmolested by the war-balloons.

On the night of the fifth of September the five words: "The hour and the man," went flying over the wires from Washington throughout the length and breadth of the North American Continent. The next morning half the industries of the United States were paralysed; all the lines of communication by telegraph and rail between the east and west were severed, the shore ends of the Atlantic cables were cut, no newspapers appeared, and every dockyard on the eastern coast was in the hands of the Terrorists.

To complete the stupor produced by this swift succession of astounding events, when the sun rose an air-ship was seen floating high in the air over the ten arsenals of the United States—that is to say, over Portsmouth, Charlestown, Brooklyn, League Island, New London, Washington, Norfolk, Pensacola, Mare Island, and Port Royal, while two others held Chicago and St. Louis, the great railway centres for the west and south, at their mercy, and the *Ithuriel*, with a broad red flag flying from her stern, swept like a meteor along the eastern coast from Maine to Florida.

To attempt to describe the condition of frenzied panic into which the inhabitants of the threatened cities, and even the whole of the Eastern States were thrown by the events of that ever-memorable morning, would be to essay an utterly hopeless task. From the millionaire in his palace to the outcasts who swarmed in the slums, not a man or a woman kept a cool head save those who were in the councils of the Terrorists. The blow had fallen with such stupefying suddenness that, as far as America was concerned, the Revolution was practically accomplished before anyone very well knew what had happened.

Out of the midst of an apparently peaceful and industrious population five millions of armed men had sprung in a single night. Factories and workshops had opened their doors, but none entered them; ships lay idle by the wharves; offices were deserted; and the great reels of paper hung motionless beside the paralysed machines which should have converted them into newspapers.

It was not a strike, for no mere trade organisation could have accomplished such a miracle. It was the force born of the accumulation of twenty years of untiring labour striking one mighty blow which shattered the commercial organism of a Continent in a single instant. Those who had been clerks or labourers yesterday, patient, peaceful, and law-abiding, were to-day soldiers, armed and disciplined, and obeying with automatic regularity the unheard command of some unknown chief.

This of itself would have been enough to throw the United States into a panic, but, worse than all, the presence of the air-ships holding at their mercy the arsenals and the richest cities in the Eastern States proved that, tremendous and all as it was, this was only a phase of some vast and mysterious cataclysm which might as easily involve the whole civilised world as it could overwhelm the United States of America.

By noon, almost without striking a blow, every dynamite cruiser and war-ship on the eastern coast had been seized and manned by the Terrorists. To the dismay of the authorities, it was found that more than half the army and navy, officers and men alike, had obeyed the mysterious summons that had gone throughout the land the night before, and matters reached a climax when, as the clocks of

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Washington were striking twelve, the President himself was arrested in the White House.

All the streets of Washington were in the hands of the Terrorists, and at one o'clock Tremayne, after posting guards at all the approaches, entered the Senate, and in the name of Natas proclaimed the constitution of the United States null and void and the existing Government dissolved.

Then with a copy of the Constitution in his hand he proceeded to the steps of the Capitol, and, in the presence of a vast throng of the armed members of the American Section, he proclaimed the Federation of the English-speaking races of the world, in virtue of their bonds of kindred blood and speech and common interests; and amidst a scene of the wildest enthusiasm called upon all who owned those bonds to forget the artificial divisions that had separated them into hostile nations and communities, and to follow the leadership of the Brotherhood to the conquest of the civilised world.

Then in a few strong and simple phrases he exposed the subservience of the Government to the capitalist Ring and, described the inhuman compact that it had entered into with the arch-enemies of national freedom and personal liberty to crush the mother-land of the Anglo-Saxon nations, and for the sake of sordid gain to rivet the fetters of oppression upon the limbs of the race which for a thousand years had stood in the forefront of the battle for freedom.

As he concluded his appeal, one mighty shout of wrath and execration rose up to Heaven from a million throats. He waited until this died away into silence, then, raising the copy of the Constitution above his head, he cried in clear ringing tones:

"For a hundred and fifty years this has been boasted as the bulwark of liberty and used as the instrument of social and commercial oppression. The Republic of America has been governed, not by patriots and statesmen, but by millionaires and their hired political puppets. It is therefore a fraud and a sham, and deserves no longer to exist!"

So saying, he tore the paper into fragments and cast them into the air amidst a storm of cheers and volley after volley of musketry. While the enthusiasm was at its height the *Ithuriel* suddenly swept downwards from the sky in full view of the mighty assemblage that swarmed round the Capitol. She was greeted with a roar of wondering welcome, for her appearance was the fulfilment of a promise upon which the success of the Revolution in America had largely depended.

This was the promise, issued by Tremayne several days previously through the commanders of the various divisions of the Section, that as soon as the Anglo-Saxon Federation was proclaimed and accepted in America, the whole Brotherhood throughout the world would fall into line with it and place its aerial navy at the disposal of its leaders. Practically this was giving the empire of the world in exchange for a money-despotism of which everyone save the millionaires and their servants had become heartily sick.

There were few who in their hearts did not believe the Republic to be a colossal fraud, and therefore there were few who regretted it.

The *Ithuriel* passed slowly over the heads of the wondering crowd and came to a standstill alongside the steps on which Tremayne was standing. The crowd saw a man on the deck shake hands with Tremayne and give him a folded paper. Then the air-ship swept gracefully upwards again in a spiral curve until she hung motionless over the dome of the Capitol.

Amidst a silence born of breathless interest to know the import of this message from the sky, Tremayne opened the paper, glanced at its contents, and handed it to the senior officer in command of the brigades, who stood beside him.

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This man, a veteran who had grown grey in the service of the Brotherhood, advanced with the open paper in his hand and read out in a loud voice:

"Natas sends greeting to the Brotherhood in America. The work has been well done, and the reward of patient labour is at hand. This is to name Alan Tremayne, Chief of the Central Executive, first President of the Anglo-Saxon Federation throughout the world, and to invest him with the supreme authority for the ordering of its affairs. The aerial navy of the Brotherhood is placed at his disposal to co-operate with the armies and fleets of the Federation.

"NATAS."

When the mightly shout of acclamation which greeted the reading of this commission had died away, Tremayne stepped foward again and spoke the few words that now remained to be said:

"I accept the office and all that it implies. The fate of the world lies in our hands, and as we decide it so will the future lot of humanity be good or evil. The armies of the Franco-Slavonian League are now masters of the continent of Europe, and are preparing for the invasion of Britain. The first use that I shall make of the authority now vested in me will be to summon the Czar in the name of the Federation to sheath the sword at once and relinquish his designs on Britain. The moment that one of his soldiers sets foot on the sacred soil of our mother-land I shall declare war upon him, and it shall be a war not of conquest, but of extermination, and we will make an end of tyranny on earth for ever.

"Now let those who are not on guard-duty go to their homes, and remember that they are now citizens of a greater realm than the United States and endowed with more than national duties and responsibilities. Let every man's person and property be respected, and let the penalty of all violence be death. Those who have plotted against the public welfare will be dealt with in due course, and yonder air-ship will be despatched with our message to the Czar at sundown. Long live the Federation!"

Millions of throats took up the cry as the last words left his lips until it rolled away from the Capitol in mighty waves of sound, flowing along the crowded streets and overrunning the utmost confines of the capital.

Thus, without the loss of a hundred lives and in a space of less than twelve hours, was the Revolution in America accomplished. The triumph of the Terrorists was as complete as it had been unexpected. Menaced by air and sea and land, the great centres of population made no resistance, and, when they learnt the true object of the Revolution, wanted to make none. No one really believed in the late Government, and everyone in his soul hated and despised the millionaires.

There was no bond between them and their fellow-men but money, and the moment that was snapped they were looked upon in their true nature as criminals and outcasts from the pale of humanity. By sundown, when the *Ithuriel* left for the seat of war, the members of the Ring and those of the late Government who refused to acknowledge the Federation were lodged in prison, and news had been received from Montreal that the simultaneous rising of the Canadian Section had been completely successful, and that all the railways and arsenals and ships of war were in the hands of the Terrorists, so completing the capture of the North American Continent.

CHAPTER LVIII.

The Day of Reckoning.

The President of the Federation and his faithful subordinates went to work without losing an hour to reorganise as far as was necessary, the internal affairs of the Continent of which they had so suddenly become the undisputed masters. There was some trouble with the British authorities in Canada, who, from mistaken motives of duty to the mother country, at first refused to recognise the Federation.

The consequence of this was that Tremayne went north the next day and had an interview with the Governor-General at Montreal. At the same time he ordered six air-ships and twenty-five dynamite cruisers to blockade the St. Lawrence and the eastern ports. The Canadian Pacific Railway and the telegraph lines to the west were already in the hands of the Terrorists, and a million men were under arms waiting his commands.

A very brief explanation, therefore, sufficed to show the Governor that forcible resistance would not only be the purest madness, but that it would also seriously interfere with the working of the great scheme of the Federation, the object of which was, not merely to keep Britain in the first place among the nations, but to make the Anglo-Saxon race the one dominant power in the whole world.

To all the Governor's objections on the score of loyalty to the British Crown, Tremayne, who heard him to the end without interruption, simply replied in a tone that precluded all further argument:

"The day of states and empires, and therefore of loyalty to sovereigns, has gone by. The history of nations is the history of intrigue, quarrelling, and bloodshed, and we are determined to put a stop to warfare for good and all. We hold in our hands the only power that can thwart the designs of the League and avert an era of tyranny and retrogression. That power we intend to use whether the British Government likes it or not.

"We shall save Britain, if necessary, in spite of her rulers. If they stand in the way, so much the worse for them. They will be called upon to resign in favour of the Federation and its executive within the next seven days. If they consent, the forces of the League will never cross the Straits of Dover. If they refuse we shall allow Britain to taste the results of their choice and then settle the matter in our own way."

The next day the Governor dissolved the Canadian Legislatures "under protest," and retired into private life for the present. He felt that it was no time to argue with a man who had millions of men behind him, to say nothing of an aerial fleet which alone could reduce Montreal to ruins in twelve hours.

After arranging matters in Canada the President returned to Washington in the *Ariel*, which he had taken into his personal service for the present, and set about disposing of the Ring and those members of the late Government who were most deeply implicated in the secret alliance with the leaders of the League. When the facts of this scheme were made public they raised such a storm of popular indignation that if those responsible for it had been turned loose in the streets of Washington they would have been torn to pieces like vermin.

As it was, however, they were placed upon their trial before a Commission of seven members of the Inner Circle of the American Section presided over by the President. Their guilt was speedily proved beyond the shadow of a doubt. Documents, memoranda, and telegrams were produced by men who had seemed their most trusted servants, but who in reality, had been members of the Brotherhood told off to unearth their schemes.

Cyphers were translated which showed that they had practically sold the resources of the country in advance to the Czar and his allies, and that they were only waiting the signal to declare war without warning and without cause upon Britain, blockade her ports, and starve her into surrender and acceptance of any terms that the victors might choose to impose. Last of all the terms of the bargain between the League and the Ring were produced, signed by the late President and the Secretary of

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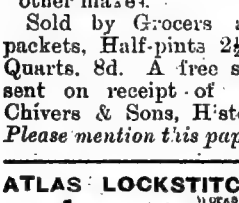

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FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,
Sick Headache, Constipation, Wind and Pains in Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver, and Female Ailments.

SALE OVER SIX MILLION BOXES YEARLY.

In Boxes, 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

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CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. H. (Room 8), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

TOO STOUT

I was for years; by chance I came across a simple home remedy that reduced me from 17st. to 10st. 12lb., and I will willingly send particulars free to any sufferer enclosing stamp. Mrs. L. E. FELL, 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

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HAIR DESTROYED.

Send me an envelope (stamped and addressed) and I will tell you how to remove all superfluous hair free of charge. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Miss E. V. (Room 3), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

Don't Cough—use
They at once check the Cough and remove the cause.
The Unrivalled
One Lozenge alone relieves.
Sold everywhere, Tins 13½d. each.
Keatings Lozenges

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

ROSY CHEEKS and a lovely Complexion, clear as alabaster, free from Pimples, Blotches, Sallowness, Greasiness, Blackheads, etc., immediately produced by one Box of **Dr. LENNOX'S Harmless Arsenic Complexion Wafers,** no matter how bad your complexion may be at present. Price per large box, with medical guarantee, post free, 2/6, privately packed, from H. LENNOX, 21 Electric Avenue, Brixton, London. Warranted perfectly harmless. Free sample for stamped directed envelope.

THE ONLY EFFICACIOUS SUBSTITUTE FOR COD LIVER OIL.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM.

(Really Genuine). In Patent Air-tight Tins, ½lb., 1/4 1lb., 2/4; 2lb., 4/-, including Tin and Postage.

Mrs. CONYERS,
Morchard Bishop, Devon.

VARICOCELE.

Men who are weak and suffering from nervous exhaustion, loss of vigour, Varicocele, &c., can be successfully and permanently cured without operation or detention from business by THE DR. COLLINS most improved and rational method medical science has ever yet produced.

Particulars and proofs of successful cures sent free on receipt of address.

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State, and countersigned by the Russian Minister at Washington.

The Court sat for three days, and re-assembled on the fourth to deliver its verdict and sentence. Fifteen members of the late Government, including the President, the Vice-President, and the Secretary of State, and twenty-four great capitalists composing the Ring, were found guilty of giving and receiving bribes, directly and indirectly, and of betraying and conspiring to betray the confidence of the American people in its elected representatives, and also of conspiring to make war without due cause on a friendly Power for purely commercial reasons.

At eleven o'clock on the morning of the 9th of October the President of the Federation rose in the Senate House, amidst breathless silence, to pronounce the sentence of the Court.

"All the accused," he said, speaking in slow, deliberate tones, "have been proved guilty of such treason against their own race and the welfare of humanity as no men ever were guilty of before in all the disreputable history of statecraft.

"In view of the suffering and misery to millions of their fellow men, and the irreparable injury to the cause of civilisation that would have resulted from the success of their schemes, it would be impossible for human wit to devise any punishment which in itself would be adequate. The sentence of the Court is the extreme penalty known to human justice—Death!"

A shudder passed through the vast assembly as he pronounced the ominous word, and the accused, who but a few days before had looked upon the world as their footstool, gazed with blanched faces and terror-stricken eyes upon each other. He paused for a moment, and looked sternly upon them. Then he went on:

"But the Federation does not seek a punishment of revenge but of justice, nor shall its first act of government be the shedding of blood, however guilty. Therefore as President I override the sentence of death, and instead condemn you, who have been proved guilty of this unspeakable crime, to confiscation of the wealth that you have acquired so unscrupulously and used so mercilessly, and to perpetual banishment with your wives and families, who have shared the profits of your infamous traffic.

"You will be at once conveyed to Kodiak Island, off the coast of Alaska, and landed there. Once every six months you will be visited by a steamer, which will supply you with the necessaries of life, and the original penalty of death will be the immediate punishment of any one of you who attempts to return to a world of which you from this moment cease to be citizens."

The sentence was carried out without an hour's delay. The exiles, with their wives and families, were placed under a strong guard in a special train, which conveyed them from Washington *vi*á St. Louis, to San Francisco, where they were transferred to a steamer which took them to the lonely and desolate island in the frozen North which was to be their home for the rest of their lives. They were followed by the execrations of a whole people and the regrets of none save the money-worshippers who had respected them, not as men, but as incarnations of the purchasing power of wealth.

The huge fortunes which they had amassed, amounting in the aggregate to more than three hundred millions in English money, were placed in the public treasury for the immediate purposes of the war which the Federation was about to wage for the empire of the world. All their real estate property was transferred to the various municipalities in which it was situated, and their rents devoted to the relief of taxation, while the railways and other enterprises which they had controlled were declared public property and placed in the hands of boards of management composed of their own officials.

(To be continued.)

DID YOU BEGIN THE NEW YEAR WELL— ?

By reading the opening chapters of

"The Golden Gates,"

Now appearing in PEARSON'S WEEKLY? It is a powerful romance by Headon Hill.

Get a copy at once—P.W., mind you.

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ILLUSTRATED WAR NEWS.

ONE PENNY WEEKLY.

You should read it regularly if you would be well informed of what our brave troops are doing in South Africa.

Splendid Pictures of War Scenes.

By Special Artists.

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By Special Correspondents, and the Best Military Experts.

Order of your Newsagent TO-DAY.

£100 FOR SOLVING IT.

Pearson's Puzzle is the sensation of the age. See that you get one at once.

SOLD EVERYWHERE. PRICE 1s.

Result of the Coupon Competition.

The publication of the result of this competition has been delayed on account of the enormous number of coupons received. It is, of course, impossible to give any detailed list of the winners of the prizes, unless we issued a double number, and we regret that we are unable to maintain any correspondence in regard to the competition. All persons to whom prizes have been awarded have been communicated with, and these include everybody who forwarded one hundred or more coupons. The largest number was received from

Mr. A. M. Barlow,
26 Upper Parliament Street,
Liverpool,

who sent 43,370 coupons, and to him we have therefore dispatched a cheque for £100. The second prize of £50 was won by

Mr. E. C. Colegrave,
40 Danby Street,
Peckham, S.E.;

and the third prize of £20 by

Mr. R. M. Wakely,
Rainham,
Kent.

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A REGULAR CORKER

PEARSON'S WONDERFUL TALKING PUZZLE

IT'S HARD TO HOLD A GOOD THING DOWN.

WE CAN'T STOP THE RUSH.

HAVE YOU GOT ONE?

£100 in PRIZES.

EVERYONE HAS AN EQUAL CHANCE.

GET ONE TO-DAY.

SOLD AT ALL BOOKSTALLS AND NEWSAGENTS.

. . . PRICE . . .

ONE SHILLING

POST FREE, 1s. 1½d. DIRECT FROM US.

Mark your envelope "TALKING PUZZLE," and address it to

C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., HENRIETTA STREET, LONDON.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

ON this page, under the title, "The Brain Gymnasium," will appear each week a series of puzzles calculated to occupy the attention of the competitors, with interest and profit to themselves, during the long winter evenings. Many of the tasks set will be comparatively easy of solution, while others will be designed with a view to taxing the abilities of the most proficient in this direction.

In each of the competitions a prize of ten shillings will be awarded to the sender of the first correct solution dealt with, and to the sender of the next five correct ones will be presented, in the case of the odd number competitions, one of our silver pencil cases, and, in the case of the even number competitions, a copy of a popular six-shilling novel.

All solutions must be written on separate postcards, and must reach the Editor, SHORT STORIES, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, January 22nd, 1900. Mark the postcards "Brain Gymnasium, No. 12," "Brain Gymnasium, No. 13," etc., according to the number of the competition of which the solution is sent.

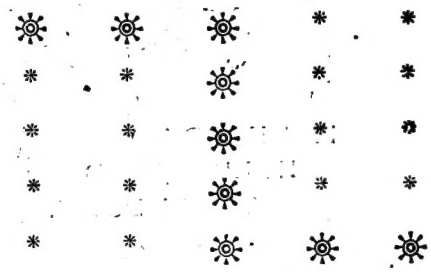
No. 12.

Replace the asterisks with letters so that each horizontal line will give the name of an English town. The initials will then form a word.

No. 13.

I AM what a cyclist often does on the track; cross out my third and sixth letters, and I am what a cyclist often does on the road; now cut off my initial and final, and I name a part of the cycle. What am I?

No. 14.



IN place of the above asterisks, insert the following letters, so that each horizontal line forms a word. The letters represented by the dark asterisks will then give, in three words, the name of something which all SHORT STORIES readers know how to use:

A D D D E E E E E E I I K L N N N N P R R S T T T Y

No. 15.

THE first and third letters of words signifying "a retreat," "a vessel," "condition," "a fern," "clatter," "pride," "ignominious," "a division of India," "a metal," and "charity," will form the names of a well-known football club and its home district.

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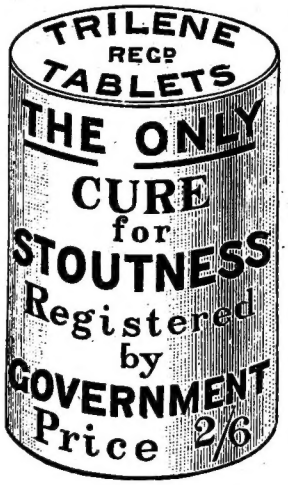
ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

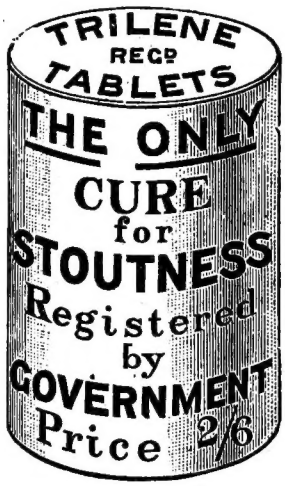
TRILENE TABLETS Regd



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send **2s. 6d.** to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION**, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

'Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

MRS. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 6lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 21lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

MRS. D. BURTON, of Silvercleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

MISS NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

MR. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is herd tary."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

MR. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to ake more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

MRS. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

MRS. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

MRS E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

MRS. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver nr Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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OROCO SOX

A New Invention to keep the feet warm and dry yet allowing perfect ventilation.

18 pairs post free for 1/- State size required.

A boon for tender & tired feet

WILL SUIT YOU DOWN TO THE GROUND.

OROCO M'F'G. Co. WIGAN.

Selfridge's

Red White & Blue

IN MAKING, USE LESS QUANTITY, IT BEING SO MUCH STRONGER THAN ORDINARY COFFEE

SOLD EVERY WHERE!

Coffee-Delicious for Breakfast & after Dinner.

DON'T HAVE CORNS

BUNIONS or ENLARGED TOE JOINTS, when a packet of

THOMPSON'S CELEBRATED CORN PLASTER

will cure you. It is thin as silk, and removes the pain at once. Post free, 14 stamps, from the Proprietor. Beware of imitations.

LADIES should take **DR. SIMPSON'S ARSENICAL PEARLS.** They secure a beautiful clear complexion, free from Blotch, Pimples and Roughness. Post free, **2/9** and **4/6** only, from M. F. THOMPSON, Homœopathic Chemist, 17 GORDON STREET, GLASGOW.

Ask for Thompson's Pamphlet, "The Woman Beautiful."

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"DOLLY" Cream Colour, for Tinting Curtains, Muslins, Laces, Silks, Blouses, etc., a rich Cream Shade.

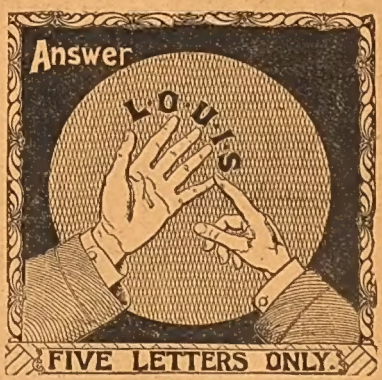
"DOLLY" Tints manufactured in nine shades—Pink, Terra Cotta, Old Gold, Heliotrope, Pea Green, Canary Yellow, Cream, Red, and Blue, for tinting Faded Ribbons, Lace, etc. Sold everywhere, **1d.** per bag. Will wash out when required.

"Dolly" Fast Dyes.

The "Dolly" Dyes are fast on Wool and Cotton alike, and will not wash out or fade. "Dolly" Dyes are not Tints, but are solid Colours, viz.: Black, Brown, Blue, Green, Red, and Maroon. Price, 1d. each Dye. "Dolly" Dyes for Home Dyeing are sold by all Grocers and Oilmen.

WILLIAM EDGE & SONS LTD BOLTON, LANCS.

HOW DO YOU SPELL VELVETEEN?



Don't Forget this when You Buy.

Every Yard is Stamped L-O-U-I-S

ZEBRA GRATE POLISH.